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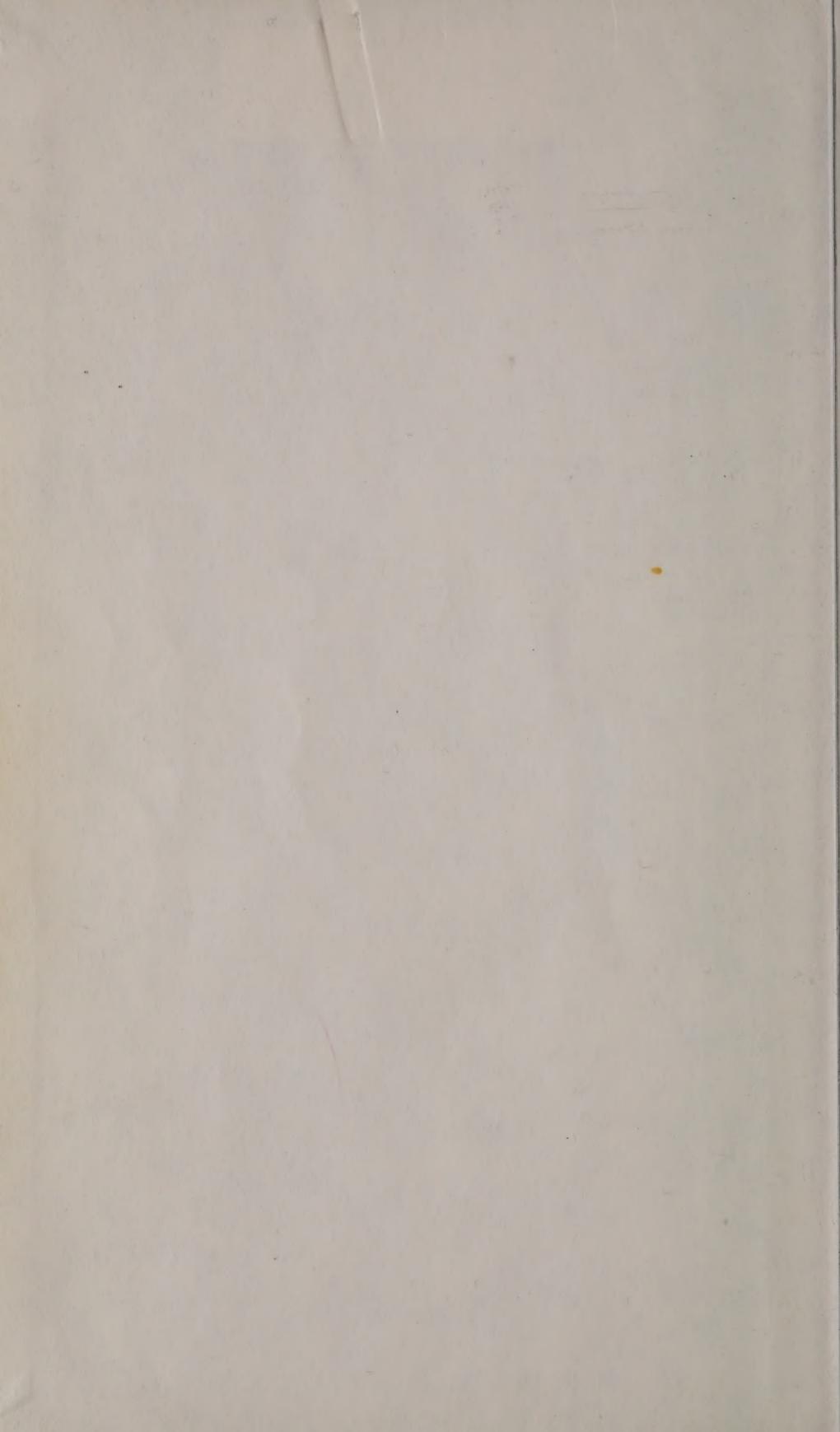
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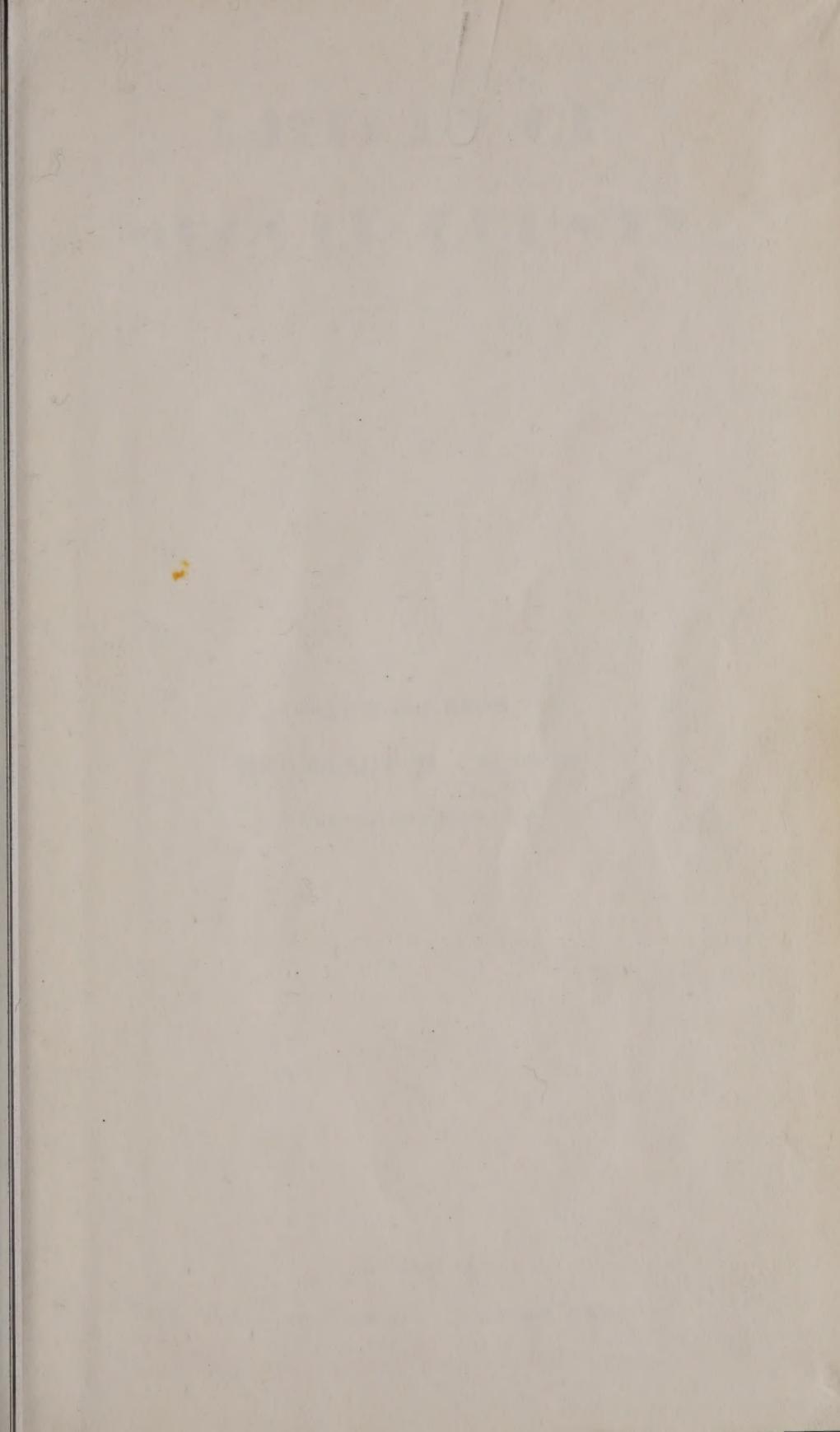
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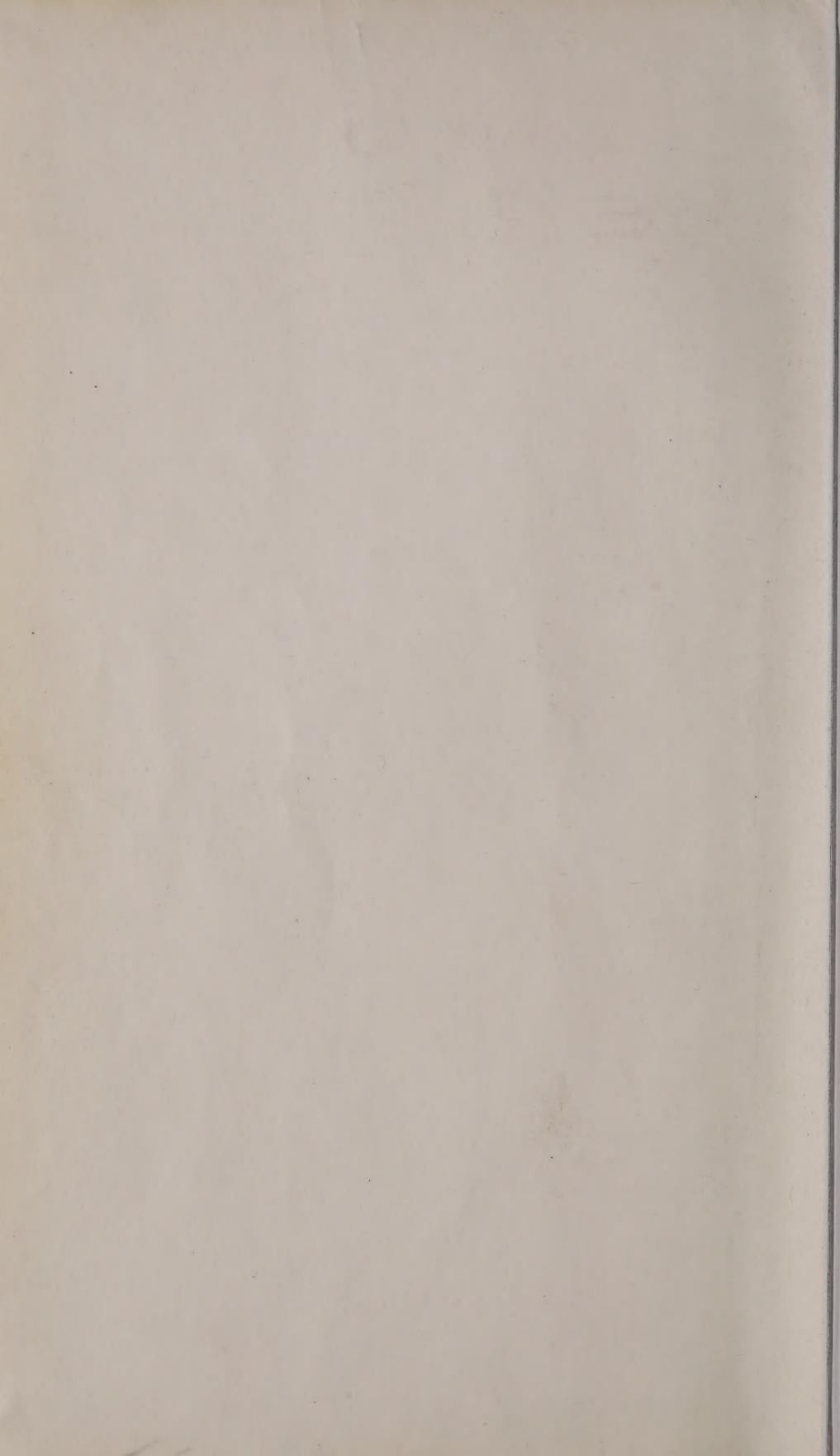
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HISTORY OF MERCER COUNTY,

Ohio

Compiled and Edited by
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Curator and Historian

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FOREWORD

The citizens of Mercer County and more specifically, their schools and libraries have never had the benefit and convenience of a complete and concise history of their country.

When the Mercer County Historical Society, Inc. was founded and its organization finally completed, February 21, 1958, the publication of such a history was made one of its prime objectives.

The Society authorized the compilation and publication of a history that would embrace the important highlights and events and also happenings which lead to, resulted from, or followed these noteworthy milestones in Mercer County's formative years.

It is hoped that this History will be a valuable accession to our public libraries and the classrooms of Mercer County schools, and will find a place in history study courses, and as a reference book for themes or school papers.

The Mercer County story based on scientific facts and geological research goes back hundreds of centuries ago and long before the glacial era when the huge ice sheets ground off the hills of Mercer County and filled its valleys with hundreds of feet of glacial deposits.

It tells the story of the opening of the Great Northwest Territory; the early Ohio country; the Indian Wars; the settlement of Mercer County and the many interesting sidelights and experiences of our courageous pioneer settlers.

Finally the story ends with a modern day touch of Mercer County today as you know it.

INTRODUCTION

The opinions and theories concerning the origin of the people who inhabited the Northwest Territory centuries ago, and of which Mercer County is a part, are conflicting and some are diametrically opposed.

In 1002, Lief Erickson, a young Norwegian sailor with 25 men, sailed from Greenland, following a southwesterly course through the great unknown seas. They first saw flat shore land with snow-capped mountains in the distance, which authorities accept as having been Labrador. Continuing their voyage southward, they found gently hilly and wooded land which undoubtedly was Newfoundland.

Still further to the south, Lief found a beautiful country, delightful climate, plenty of game and fish and an abundance of delicious grapes. Lief named it Vineland. This area is generally accepted as being between Boston harbor and Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island. Colonization efforts failed after three years due to internal strife. Disease and hardships also took their toll and the remaining colonists returned to Greenland.

During the Norse explorations it was found that the natives were small, dark and resembled the Eskimos of Greenland. It ap-

pears that during the succeeding centuries until other explorers and colonists arrived, that the weaker tribes of small natives which were found by the Norsemen, were either annihilated or driven to the frozen Arctic by a stronger, hardier race which the Europeans found.

Mound Builders

Like changes occurred among the natives of interior North America. As the weaker Eskimos disappeared, so did other empires rise and fall.

Remains of fortifications have been found; idols of clay and gypsum unearthed and Roman coins have been discovered. In Ohio, among its most famous tourist attractions are its mounds and sacred enclosures. Other small articles of an ancient people including a Persian coin have been unearthed.

In the mounds have been found altars, human bones, carvings, ornaments, implements and pottery of excellent workmanship and finish. The enclosures are classified as military and sacred; the former on high and commanding ground, while the latter are on lower ground and are believed to have been council houses, amusement grounds and places of worship.

These early inhabitants of Ohio are known as mound building Indians and occupied parts of Ohio from about 1200 B. C. to 1300 A. D. They are not considered to have been savages and were of varying degrees of development and culture. What became of them is unknown. From the time of their disappearance, several centuries passed before the appearance in Ohio of the historic Indian as we know them, about 1725. They are generally classified as Algonquin (Canadian) and Iroquois (New York) tribes.

There are many beliefs concerning the origin of the mound builders as well as other early peoples of the United States. Theories range from Phoenicia, Egypt, Hindoostan, China and Mongolia.

While dwelling with ancient peoples and cultures, let us take a brief glimpse far back into antiquity, more than a million years ago, as it applied to Ohio and Mercer County.

River Teays

Dr. Raymond E. Jannsen, an eminent Geologist is authority for facts and scientific deductions concerning the existance of the prehistoric Teays River which he termed the Ancient Precourser of the East. To put it more simply: the river of antiquity that preceded the present river system of the east, as we know it today. That includes the Ohio, Wabash, Illinois, Mississippi and their tributaries.

The original discovery was made by geologists working in the basin of the Ohio River more than a half century ago. A continued study of the terrain, buried debris and rock formations disclosed that before the Ohio River was born, the great Teays River had its source in the Appalachin mountains of North Carolina, from where it follow-

ed a northwesterly course through Virginia and into West Virginia to Charleston, along the same route as the New and Kanawha Rivers of today. The Teays then turned west through Huntington, across what is now the Ohio River and Northward to Chillicothe. A northwesterly course took the Teays past Springfield and continued to the Mercer-Auglaize line south of St. Marys.

Scientists emphasize today that along the course of the Teays, are a number of existing rivers that are disconnected portions of the Great Teays River system. Some of them are at a higher level while the deep gorges in the New River in the Appalachians are the exact channel of the Teays. The course of underground waters in deep buried channels also bears out this contention.

A map of Ohio in the 1943 edition of the Geological Survey of Ohio prepared by Wilber Stout, State Geologist in collaboration with Karl Ver Steeg and G. F. Lamb, shows the course of the Teays River through Mercer County.

It followed a course from the east shore of Grand Lake, its valley extending as far as Montezuma, then swerved to the northwest and passed just east of Celina. Two miles northeast of Celina was found the valley of the old Teays River. The glacial drift or fill there, over the river bed is 400 feet and the rock floor is at 460 feet elevation.

Southwest of Rockford, the path of the Teays was again traced. Here the fill is only 319 feet and the rock floor at 488 feet elevation. From this point a westerly course was followed and the Teays crossed the Ohio-Indiana line just north of Chattanooga.

The Teays continued across Indiana and Illinois near the present cities of La Fayette, Indiana and Champaign, Decatur and Lincoln, Illinois. It terminated about 15 miles south of St. Louis where it emptied into the Gulf of Mexico, a wide bay of which, probably from 50 to 200 miles wide, extended to this point.

Moraines

Pressures from within the earth changed plains to plateaus and time eroded mountains. During the Ice Age, sand, gravel, boulders and debris were carried over Ohio as far south as Chillicothe. Hill tops were planed off and valleys were filled.

The course of the Teays was buried but the depth of bedrock and other evidence under the glacial deposits show the definite pattern of a great waterway that had its origin millions of years ago.

Mercer County is in the Mississippi Valley glacial area and its surface was also changed by abrasion and the deposits of both the Illinois and Wisconsin Ice Sheets.

Moraines are billowy or rounded ridges or masses of materials deposited along the line of the greatest advance of the ice sheets, or in other words where melting occurred. There are three Moraines

in Mercer county. The Fort Wayne which dips down into Dublin and Union Townships. The Wabash Moraine which extends almost due east and west across the county, the highest point of which is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of Celina and known as Crockett's Hill. The St. Johns Moraine extends through Recovery, Granville and Marion townships.

Mound Builders in Mercer County

According to Archeological records, Ohio contains a greater number of pre-historic Mound Builder remains than any other equal area in the Mississippi valley. Some estimates are as high as 11,000, however considerably less is recorded in the Ohio Archeological Atlases.

Northwestern Ohio was generally unsuited to the occupancy of these people because of its low and swampy nature. The Mound Builders were of three groups of cultures, the Fort Ancient, Adena and Hopewell and it was a small number of the Hopewell culture that reached Northwestern Ohio and Mercer County.

The Hopewell group existed at about the time of Christ but little is known of them. They are accepted as being the most highly developed, as evidenced by some of their earthworks as well as geometric designs.

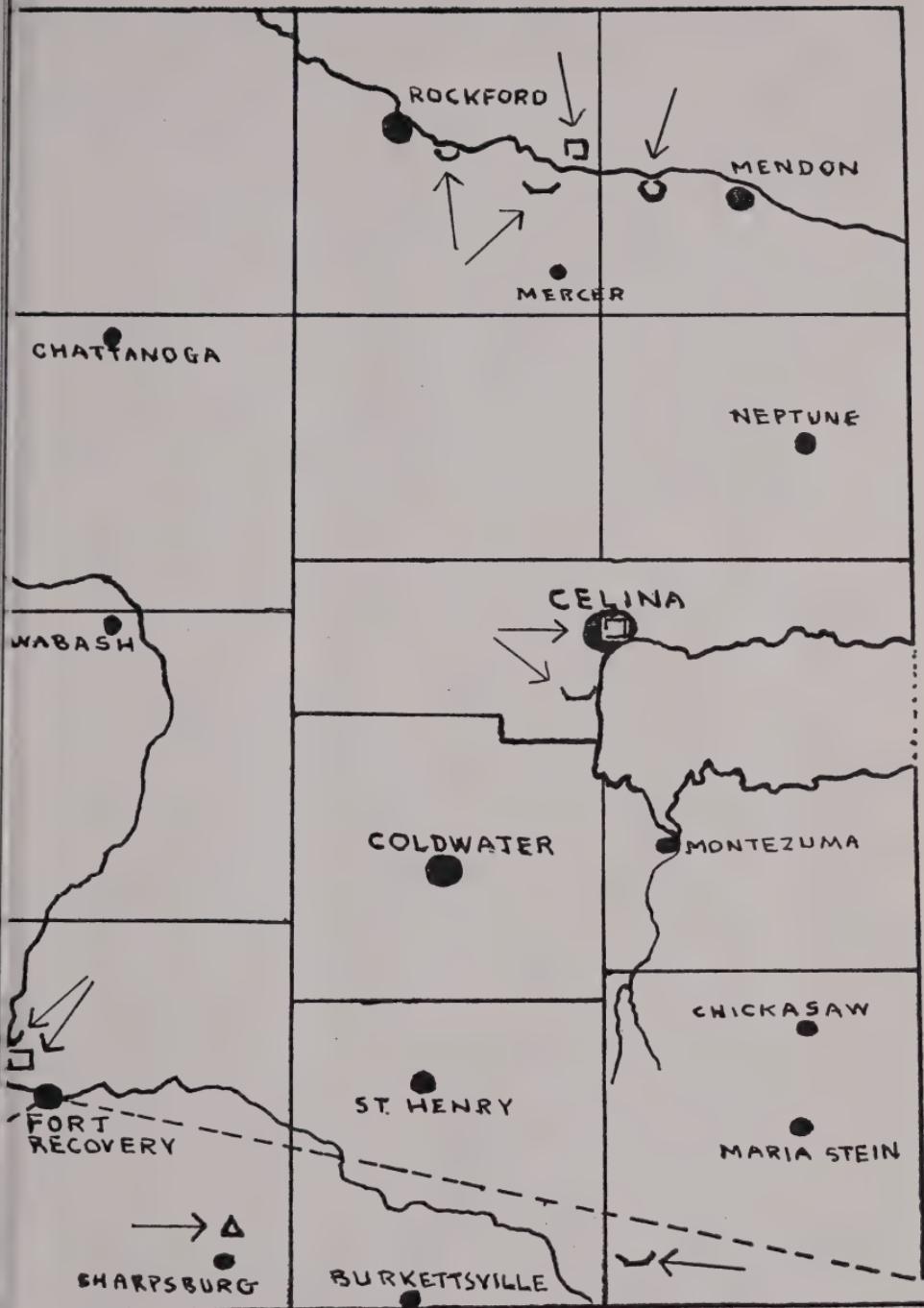
It is not known whether the Hopewell group in Mercer County and a few which filtered into Indiana were a migrating group or only a fringe area of the Hopewell culture. They left five enclosures, four burial places and one mound in Mercer County.

Mercer County's only mound is in Gibson Township, Section 25, about one-half mile north of Sharpsburg on the Stammen farm. It is probably 18 to 20 feet high and several hundred feet in diameter. Only by knowing its location would it be recognized as a Mound. Instead it would appear to be a smooth, rounded knoll, one end of which the road cuts through.

Mounds contained remains of the dead although they are not classed as burial grounds. After drying and slipping the flesh from the bones, the skeletons were buried at ground level or below. Earth was then carried in baskets of bark or animal skin and dumped over the vaults. In some excavations, earth and clay of differing colors have been found side by side and also the imprint of the weave of the bark baskets used.

By this method the mound was continued until it reached the desired height when it was finished to a uniform smooth surface and unbroken curving summit.

Enclosures are thought to have been used as public meeting sites, council assemblies, ceremonial grounds and probably also as observation posts. Generally they are in a high and commanding position. They are rectangular, crescent and circular in shape.



RECTANGULAR
ENCLOSURE

CIRCULAR
ENCLOSURE

CRESCENT
ENCLOSURE

BURIAL GROUND

MOUND

A rectangular enclosure is three-quarters of a mile northwest of Fort Recovery in Section 18, west of Route 49 and north of this is a burial spot.

Between Sections 28 and 33 in Marion Townships is a second burial place. No traces of these burial places can be detected as they are not mounded.

One mile south of Celina in Section 12, approximately on U. S. Highway 127 is another Hopewell burial place. Centered approximately on the intersection of Main and Livingston streets, Celina was a rectangular enclosure.

About 1½ miles southeast of Rockford between U. S. 33 and the St. Marys River is a crescent shaped enclosure. About 1½ miles farther southeast is a burial ground.

Two and one-half miles north of Mercer, astride U. S. 127 at the Mendon road is another rectangular enclosure. One and one-half miles east of 127 and one-half mile north of Route 707 near the St. Marys River is a circular enclosure.

Passing by this period of antiquity and leaving its mysteries to the scientists, we will move to the early years of the 17th century which directly concerns Mercer County and its formation and development.

The Northwest Territory

By virtue of charters granted by King James I of England from 1606 to 1611, Virginia acquired title to all of the vast Northwest Territory. That included the area north of the Ohio River and bounded by Pennsylvania, the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. Today it comprises Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

In 1783 the Virginia General Assembly authorized their delegates in Congress to convey all rights in this territory to the United States. July 13, 1787, Congress passed the famous Ordinance of 1787 as the first step in establishing civil government in the area. It provided that at least three but not more than five states be set up. Thus ended the claims of Connecticut to the northern parts of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois and of Massachusetts to the southern parts of Michigan and Wisconsin.

Ohio's south and east boundaries remained unchanged through the years. The west portion of the north line between Ohio and Michigan as it stands today was established in 1836 after years of strife and a near state of warfare. Two previous lines were south of Toledo. The west boundary extending from the mouth of the Great Miami River due north, was established in 1802, a slight change from the line of 1800.

At the time of the passage of the Ordinance of 1787, with the exception of trading posts, it is the accepted opinion that there were no permanent white settlements in northwestern Ohio, unless there could have been a few along the Maumee River.

Early Explorers

The establishment of the Northwest Territory in 1787 does not mean that previous interest in the area had not been manifested. Early explorers had traversed a greater part of Ohio. In 1749, Celoran, a Frenchman followed the Ohio River to the Great Miami River and then up stream to the Indian village of Pickwillany, now Piqua. He then traveled almost due north near the present sites of Wapakoneta and Lima to the Maumee River and to Lake Erie.

Of greater interest to Mercer Countians was the route of Charles Langlade, half-breed French-Indian, with 240 Indians and a few Frenchmen in 1752. His route followed the Maumee River to the present site of Fort Wayne and then up the St. Marys River and then south through Mercer County, passing near Celina on his way to Pickawillany. Here in a sunrise attack, British prestige was dealt a severe blow. The Miami Chief La Demoiselle, friend of the British and a number of English traders were killed and \$15,000 worth of stock was taken. That was the first military expedition to pass through Mercer County.

Indian Tribes

The Ohio wilderness was covered by a network of Indian Trails and warpaths and this probably can be accounted for by the fact that in 1725 this area was occupied by eight different Indian tribes, the Eries having been destroyed in 1655.

The site of Mercer County practically joined the hunting grounds of three tribes that occupied western Ohio. The Ottawas were in the north, the Senecas in the east and the great Miami tribes in the south. In fact Mercer County was in Miami territory.

Later the Shawnees occupied a Reservation near Shanes Crossing (Rockford). The Shawnees were of Algonquin origin and moved from New York to southeastern Ohio. They became a migrating nation either through wars, voluntary movement or government assignment to reservations.

The Mercer County Shawnees came from southeastern Ohio and were later moved by the government to a reservation in Kansas. Other Shawnees settled in Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

The presence of several tribes probably accounts for the four Indian Trails that traversed the western part of Ohio, all leading from Cincinnati. The Wabash Trail forked at Greenville, one branch leading near the site of Fort Recovery and the east fork passing near Celina. These trails joined about 30 miles north of Celina and terminated at Defiance on the Maumee.

Wars 1776 and 1812

During the Revolutionary War there were numerous troop movements through the Ohio area, however the northwestern section was untouched except by the British under Bird who moved down

the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers and then along the Great Miami River to Kentucky.

In the War of 1812, General William Harrison's expedition moved from Cincinnati to Detroit. Enroute, he built a fort at Girty's Town (St. Marys) and sent one detachment as far as Shanes Crossing (Rockford). He went to the aid of Fort Wayne which was threatened and then continued his campaign into northwestern Ohio and eventually into Canada.

The Indian War

During the Indian War, in 1789, after the Fort Harmar Treaty, various tribes again became hostile, in which they were encouraged by the British and further inflamed to frenzy by the infamous renegades Girty and McKee. Pillaging, massacres and fighting became general.

In September, 1790, General Harmar with 1500 men marched into the Indian country, destroying villages. He crossed the St. Marys River and was at the site of Fort Wayne when he met two disastrous defeats. He boasted of victory, however historians agree that he was defeated due to carelessness and today it is known as Harmar's Defeat.

General St. Clair's Defeat

In 1791 another expedition of 2000 men was sent into northwestern Ohio, under the command of General Arthur St. Clair.

The army reached the upper tributary of the upper Wabash River (Ft. Recovery) and thus far the expedition had been successfully carried out. Worn by fatigue, the army was given an hour rest, entirely unaware of imminent danger. Single Indians or parties of two or three who were fired upon, were assumed to be prowlers. It seems evident that either scouts were not sent into the wilderness as a precautionary measure or if they were sent they failed in their purpose.

Before sunrise November 4, 1791, while breakfast was being prepared, screaming hordes of Indians attacked the camp with savage fury. Taken by surprise, scores of soldiers were killed before they could reach their guns.

The regulars made a gallant effort, however panic seized the untrained militia and they fled in disorder. The rout became general when General Butler, second in command and most of the officers were killed. General St. Clair tried in vain to rally his men and three horses were shot from under him and he finally escaped on a pack horse.

The panic stricken survivors fled to Fort Jefferson (near Greenville) about 30 miles away, leaving 38 officers and 600 soldiers killed or missing. 21 officers and 242 soldiers were wounded, many of whom died later. With the army were 250 women, wives of the sold-

iers and camp followers. Of these 56 were killed, others taken prisoner and only a few escaped.

President George Washington was angered when he first learned of the disastrous defeat. His last warning to General St. Clair had been "beware of surprise".

In order that the wrong impression of General St. Clair's courage and skill may not be formed, let us consider the facts leading up to his humiliating defeat.

Owing to the growing hostility of the Indians and the failure of treaty efforts, Congress appointed St. Clair a Major General and commander-in-chief of an expedition to treat with the Indians when possible, otherwise to destroy their villages.

General St. Clair's excellent record during the Revolutionary War was recognized and his choice by congress was accepted as an excellent one.

The General's orders were to get the troops, arms and supplies and accomplish a quick and definite objective. Some officials failed in their duty. Money was not provided to pay the troops; the necessary equipment was not made available and there was no time for drill and training. Hence an undisciplined, poorly equipped, partly armed expedition of 2000 men left Fort Washington at Cincinnati, September 7, 1791.

They cut roads through the wilderness, built three forts, the last one, Fort Jefferson, and left men to garrison them. Up to this point progress had been slow and difficult and many scores of men deserted and returned to Cincinnati.

General St. Clair did not have accurate maps or information of the country and when he reached the Wabash with only 1400 of his original 2000 men, he thought he was at the headwaters of the St. Marys River. It was his intention to build breastworks and trenches, and when his equipment arrived, he would leave a small garrison with the supplies and move on to the Indian towns on the Maumee River. The Indian daylight attack followed and brought disaster.

It is appropriate to add that the Miamis, Wyandots, Shawnees, Deleware and Seneca Indians, estimated at from 2000 to 3000 warriors in this memorable battle was commanded by the famous Chief Little Turtle, who latter advised efforts to make peace with General Anthony Wayne before the battle at the Maumee. The last years of his life were spent peacefully near Fort Wayne where he died July 12, 1812.

General Anthony Wayne

General St. Clair resigned his command and General Anthony Wayne was named Commander-in-Chief in April 1792. Additional troops were authorized and General Wayne's force was set at 5000 men.

While preparations for a vigorous campaign were under way, an earnest effort was undertaken to end the conflict through conciliatory means. Government envoys were sent to meet with the tribal leaders and were murdered. Only then was a vigorous campaign put into effect.

General Wayne's army was thoroughly trained and disciplined for Indian warfare near Pittsburgh and then moved to the trouble area, the ultimate goal being the heart of the Indian country near what is now Maumee, Ohio.

The winter of 1793-94 was spent not far from the scene of St. Clair's defeat where he built a stockade which he named Fort Recovery. One account says that the first night that they camped at the scene it was necessary for the men to brush away the bones of St. Clair's men before they could spread their blankets on the ground. Six hundred grisly skulls were counted.

In the spring, General Wayne moved northward rapidly, constantly planning to conceal his movements and his ultimate goal from the Indians. Wayne built his second fort in Mercer County, August 2, 1794 and named it Fort Adams. It was on the south bank of the St. Marys River in Section 24 of Dublin Township, 10 miles north of Celina, near U. S. Highway 127. A bronze marker has been placed at the roadside, south of the river bridge.

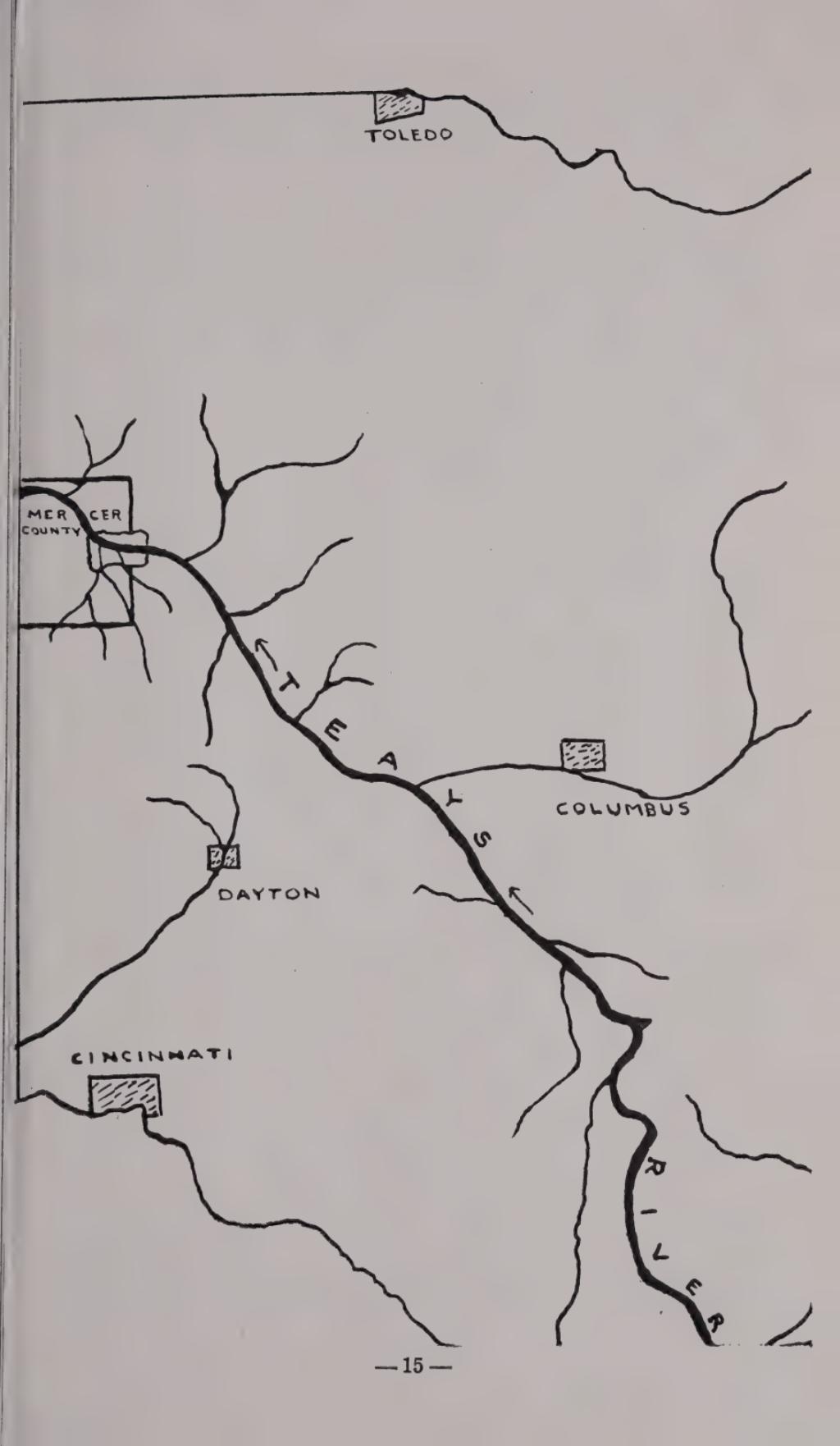
At this point, while General Wayne's actual route was being cut through the forest, two other routes were being cut, one to the east toward the rapids near Maumee and the other to the west toward Miami Town (Fort Wayne). General Wayne's strategy was in military parlance, a diversionary one, designed to confuse the enemy.

That the plan was successful is plainly evident, as he followed the middle route and suddenly struck into the heart of the Maumee country with little warning to the Indians.

At Fort Defiance, the General invited the hostile tribal chiefs to negotiate, but his efforts were fruitless. They apparently relied upon the friendship of the British, who contrary to treaties, maintained military posts in the west, one of which was at Maumee.

The great Chief Little Turtle sensed disaster for his people and advised the acceptance of General Wayne's terms. He said: "We have defeated the white soldiers twice (referring to Harmar's and St. Clair's defeats) but now they are lead by a great white chief who never sleeps - the night and day are alike to him. Think well of it."

Little Turtle's plea was ignored by the other chiefs; negotiation failed and General Wayne launched a furious attack, August 20, 1794. The Indians were driven two miles toward the British fort which failed to give them aid. They were crushingly defeated and the forest was strewn with their dead. The Northwest was saved.



TOLEDO

MERCER
COUNTY

DAYTON

COLUMBUS

CINCINNATI

WALSH

LITTLE RIVER

OHIO RIVER

All Indian nations became peaceful and in January 1795, under the leadership of Chief Little Turtle, peace negotiations started and on August 3, 1795, the Greenville Treaty was concluded.

Mercer County's Establishment

There has been differences of opinion and evidently some misinformation concerning the creation of the early counties of Ohio. This probably was due to the unsettled status of the western boundary line of Ohio, which was not finally established until 1802.

On page 20 of the 1957 edition of the Ohio Historical Atlas, authored by O. D. Morrison of the Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, are maps showing the creation of counties from 1788 to 1818. The first of these, 1788-92, shows Hamilton county bounded by the winding lower parts of the Great Miami and Scioto Rivers and then extended north to Lake Erie. Washington county was all of the vast territory east of the Scioto.

All of the narrower area lying west of the Great Miami from its mouth in the Ohio River to a point north of Piqua and then extending due north was designated as Knox county (later Indiana territory) in which the Mercer County area was included. This Knox county should not be confused with Knox County, Ohio.

In 1799 when Ohio's western boundary was established, except for a slight variation in 1802, Hamilton's boundary was extended to the Indiana line and included the Knox county area. Its northern boundary was established at the Greenville Treaty Line of 1795 which passed through what is now Marion and Granville Townships and between Recovery and Gibson Townships in Mercer County. Mercer County's area north of the Treaty Line became a part of Wayne County (Michigan) which had been set apart in 1796 and extended from the Cuyahoga River which empties into Lake Erie at Cleveland. This Wayne county should not be confused with Wayne County, Ohio.

In 1803, Mercer County became a part of Montgomery when the latter was detached from Hamilton and was extended to the Michigan line. In 1809, Darke County was established with the Greenville Treaty Line as the northern terminus, although it was a part of Miami County and was not organized as a separate unit until 1817.

January 2, 1824, the legislature detached Mercer County from Darke and organized it as a separate county. In so doing, the south boundary was changed and the area south of the Greenville Treaty Line and extending to Mercer County's present boundary, was taken from Darke County and added to Mercer County.

The Greenville Treaty Line was a boundary established by the Greenville Treaty, setting apart the United States and the Indian lands. The line in Mercer County extends from a tiny triangular segment, Section 33, which is in the extreme southeastern part of Marion Township. It then continues slightly northwest to where it divides Sec-

tions 28 and 31 at the western boundary of the township. It crosses diagonally through Granville and to Fort Recovery, being the boundary line between Recovery and Gibson Townships. From there it extends southwest to the Indiana line.

When Auglaize County was organized February 14, 1848, Range 4, East, a strip 6 miles wide was detached from Mercer and made a part of Auglaize. This change moved Mercer County's east boundary from a line that was approximately through the present sites of Spencerville, Kossuth, New Knoxville and Laramie reservoir, to its present location four miles west of St. Marys.

As first constituted in 1824, there were four townships. They were Dublin which embraced the entire area north of Celina, Marion, the original territorial limits of which the writer can find no record. It is assumed that it had an indefinite area in the south part of the county. The other original townships were St. Marys and German which were largely in the area added to Auglaize County.

St. Marys was the seat of government of Mercer County until 1839, when Celina was made the county seat.

For those who are interested in each of Mercer County's boundary changes or affiliations with other counties, they are listed here chronologically.

Actually, Mercer County like "Topsy" just "Grewed up" and like an orphan was shunted about from one county affiliation to another, before it was established as it is today.

1788-92 - It was all in Knox County, Indiana territory, although it was not known by the name of Indiana at that time.

1797 - A diagonal segment of the southern part of Mercer County (a northwest and southeast line) was in Knox and the upper portion was in Wayne County (Michigan territory).

1799-1801 - The lower diagonal segment was mostly in Hamilton County and a tiny western sliver was in Knox County, Indiana, while the north portion remained in Michigan.

1803-06 - Mercer County was entirely within Montgomery County, which extended from Butler County to the Ohio-Michigan line.

1808 - The extreme southern part (south of the Greenville Treaty line) was a part of Miami County, while the northern portion was in Montgomery.

1810 - The portion below the Treaty Line was in both Miami and Darke Counties. Miami having been divided east and west into two counties, however Darke was not organized.

1812-16 - Darke and Miami Counties each extended to the Michigan line, and Darke which included Mercer, was still unorganized.

1818 - This map shows Darke (including Mercer) as Darke was organized in 1816 and extended to the Michigan line.

1820 - Mercer and Van Wert Counties were set apart from Darke County, but were not organized and merely attached for governmental purposes. The portion below the Greenville Treaty Line was a part of Darke.

1824 - Mercer County as set apart in 1820 was organized and Van Wert was attached to it for official purposes.

1837 - Van Wert was detached from Mercer and organized.

1845 - Map shows Mercer County boundry unchanged.

1848 - This was the year of major changes, including Van Wert from Mercer; Allen from Mercer, and from Darke to Mercer the portion which today lies between the Greenville Treaty Line and the present Mercer - Darke boundry line.

1849 - When Auglaize was founded the boundries of Putnam, Allen and Shelby were changed to allow for this. Mercer County's east boundry line was moved six miles west to its present east boundry line.

A summary of the above discloses that Mercer County or portions of it was during the 61 year period from 1788 to 1849 was a part of six counties and that Van Wert, Auglaize and Allen were included in it.

Mercer County's Court Houses

Mercer County's first court house was a two story frame building, 20x24 feet and was built in 1828-29 at a cost of \$249.49 and was located in St. Marys. Before its erection, sessions of the Court of Common Pleas were held in John Pickerell's tavern for which he was paid \$5.00 per session. This is not unlike the situation in movies and TV stories depicting court sessions being held in saloons during the middle of the last century.

The second court house was built in 1839, and what is known to Mercer Countians as the old court house was built and was opened in 1869.

This two story brick structure stood on the southeast corner of the present court house square and cost \$43,773.41. It was torn down upon completion of the present beautiful edifice which was opened in 1923 and cost \$500,000. The structural plans and supervision was under the direction of Architects Peter Hulskens and associate Lyman Strong.

The county's interests were guarded and insured by close scrutiny and unselfish devotion of a bi-partisan Building Commission appointed by Judge of the Court of Common Pleas Henry A. Miller. The members were: C. A. McKim, A. C. F. Gilberg, Patrick Kenney and George Frysinger working in conjunction with the County Commissioners.

Many architects and builders from all over the nation, having national reputations, have inspected the Mercer County Court House



Mercer County Court House

and proclaimed it not only one of the best constructed but one of the most beautiful examples of Contemporary American Architecture in the United States.

Professional estimates place the cost of duplicating the Mercer County Court House today at approximately \$2,000,000. At that cost, some of the finishing features, especially the extensive use of genuine Italian black marble, would be practically unobtainable and completely prohibitive in cost.

James W. Riley

Probably no names are more widely known and so closely interwoven with the early history of Mercer County than Captain James Riley and his son James W. Riley.

Captain James Riley was born in Connecticut in 1777. As a youth he longed for a life at sea and visits at foreign and strange places. At the age of 15 he shipped as a cabin boy on a sloop bound to the West Indies. Being ambitious and apt he applied himself and at the age of 20 was master of a sailing vessel.

In 1802 he marries Phoebe Miller, but continued to follow a seafaring life that led him to all parts of the world. In 1821 he gave up his profession and with his family located on the St. Marys river where he later laid out the town of Willshire.

During his years on the sea, he was the central figure in many exciting experiences. In 1807 his ship Two Ways and cargo was confiscated by the French in the Bay of Biscay. In 1815, during a violent storm, his brig Commerce was shipwrecked on reefs off the coast of Africa.

Following this misfortune he and his crew were captured by a wandering tribe of Arabs and sold into slavery to Moorish merchants. The liberation of Captain Riley and four of his men was effected several months later by William Willshire, an American Consul. The town of Willshire was named for Mr. Riley's benefactor.

James Watson Riley, the oldest son of Captain James and Phoebe Riley was born in Connecticut, February 20, 1804. At the age of 19, he with his father surveyed much of Northwestern Ohio. He platted the towns of Celina, Van Wert, Willshire and Paulding.

Mr. Riley was appointed the Clerk of Courts when St. Marys was the county seat of Mercer county and he served for 17 years, resigning in 1841 to assume charge of the Government land office. He again served as Clerk of Courts from 1858-51, after serving in the Legislature in 1843.

In 1827, Mr. Riley was married to Miss Susan Ellis of Alexander, N. Y. and in addition to their six children, they adopted and reared six orphans.

Mr. Riley's death occurred in Celina, January 1, 1870, after having never fully recovered from spinal injuries sustained when thrown from a buggy.

JUSTIN HAMILTON

Another name that probably is linked as closely to early Mercer County history as that of any man, is Justin Hamilton. He was born in Ontario County, New York and came to Union township in 1823 where he built his first home, a log cabin on the banks of Twelve Mile Creek. Only four settlers had preceded him the previous year. His second home of frame construction which was built in 1826 still stands on a knoll overlooking the creek and although it is no longer habitable it still bears a nostalgic majesty of colonial design.

Mr. Hamilton was the first Justice of the Peace, Clerk and school teacher in Union township. He was the first president of the Mercer County Fair Board which was organized in 1851. He served as Representative in the Legislature in 1831, 32, 40 and 41.

Mr. Hamilton was also Associate Judge of the Common Pleas Court in 1846 and 47. County Auditor in 1827. County Surveyor in 1827, 1835 and 1837. Now 121 years later, not one of his surveys have ever been disproven in Mercer County courts. His one other public service was County Assessor.

GRAND LAKE

Grand Lake, which when it was built was named Grand Reservoir, remains the largest man-made lake in the world with the exception of certain bodies of water that have resulted from the construction of huge power dam projects.

When the Miami and Erie canal completed the link between Cincinnati and Toledo, a waterway system was created from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean.

To supply the canal with sufficient water to maintain a proper level, the construction of the Grand Reservoir was started in 1837 and in 1845 the task was completed at a cost of \$600,000. A feeder canal connected the reservoir with the Miami and Erie canal at St. Marys.

The original size of the Grand Reservoir was approximately 17,500 acres and the dimensions were about nine miles long and three miles wide.

Because of the encroachment of the water through erosion on the north and south shores, the area is now estimated to be from 19,000 to 20,000 acres. One example of Grand Lake's growth is the fact that of lots 1 to 40 of Celina's original plat, 20 are totally submerged and 20 are mostly under water.

Further proof of the encroachment of the lake is found along the north shore. Here the original south lines of many farms are as much as several hundred yards from the present shore line and from 5 to 15 acres of many farms are submerged.

On the east side of Riley's Point (A. A. Fishbaugh farm) the water line is now about 75 yards from the highway, Ohio 29. Here and at other points, the state has made stone fills to stop further erosion.

A number of years before reservoir construction was started, a number of settlers bought and cleared ground on the north and south shores of the prairie land now covered by Grand Lake.

When contracts were let for the construction work, Justin Hamilton, representative in the Legislature, introduced a resolution which was unanimously adopted and provided that no water was to be turned into the reservoir before the land was cleared of timber and the parties were paid for their land and crops.

An appropriation of \$20,000 was made by the Legislature for that purpose, but the money was squandered by irresponsible officials and land speculators.

CITIZENS CUT WEST BANK

When the west bank was completed, over the protests of interested persons, the water was let in and wholly or partially submerged the north shore farms of Abraham Pratt, Thomas Coate, Judge Robert Linzee, Judge Holt (Dayton), John Sunday and also the Mellinger farm which was on the south side.

A protest meeting was held in Celina, May 3, 1843, presided over by County Commissioner Samuel Ruckman. Judge Linzee was chosen as spokesman to meet with the Ohio State Board of Works at Piqua and present their grievances.

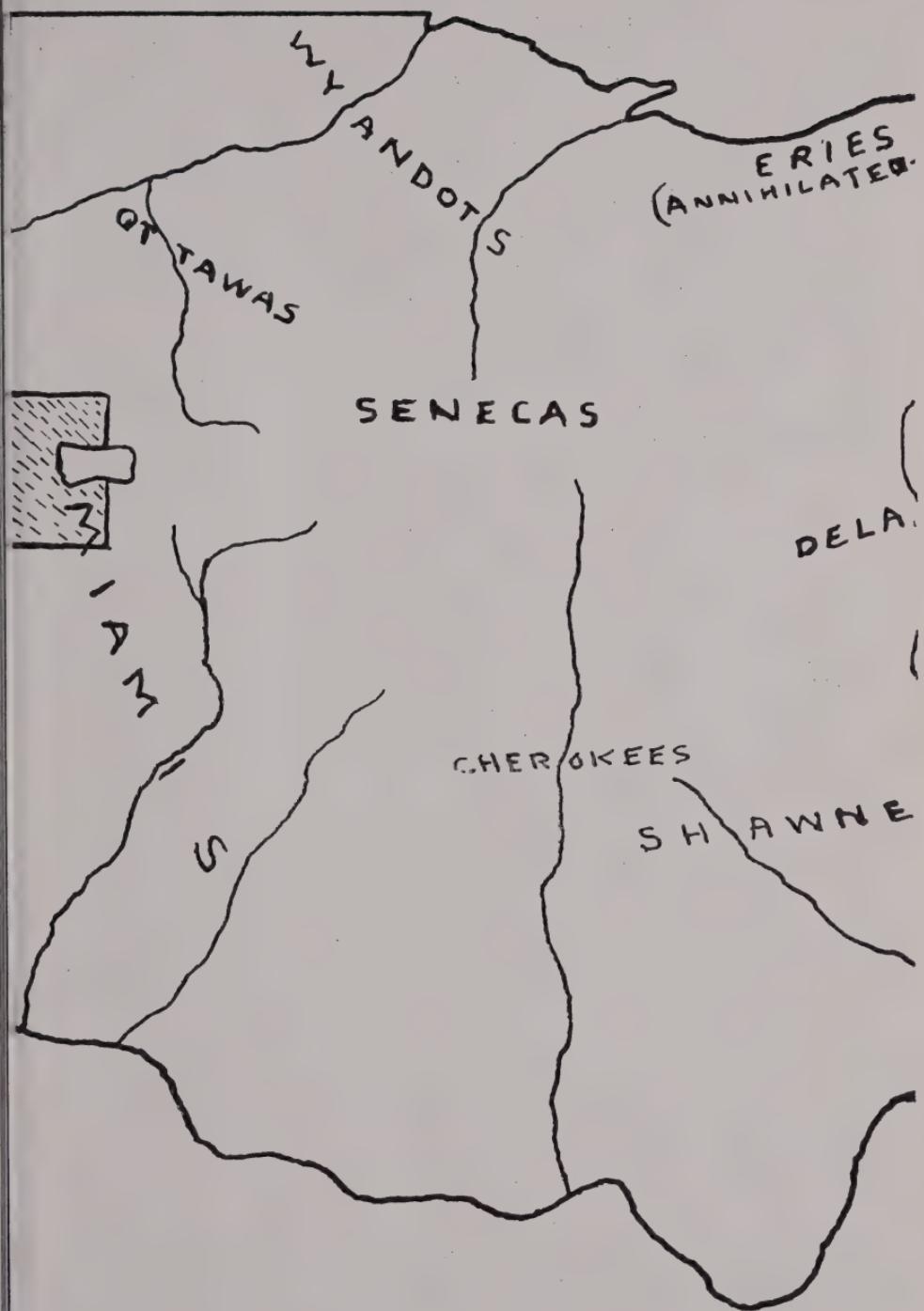
The Board ignored the injustice and damage that had been done to the landowners, and in so doing, apparently condoned the past action and aligned themselves with those who had dissipated the funds voted for damages. The Board's curt answer to Judge Linzee and the Mercer County landowners and friends was: "Help yourselves if you can".

A second protest meeting was held and Judge Linzee was sent on his second mission and was again rebuffed. He then warned the Board, if action was not taken by May 15. "we will cut the west bank". The Board of Works answered: "The Piqua guards will be with you and rout you on that day."

True to their word, 150 determined and grim Mercer Countians assembled at the west bank with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows and started the breach in the dike. Care was used not to damage the bank unnecessarily and after one and one-half days work, the cut was completed and the water of Grand Reservoir was released into Beaver Creek and its lowlands. It required six weeks for the water to subside.

The threat of the State Board of Works to send the Piqua Guards was evidently a bluff to intimidate, as they did not appear.

Later 34 of Mercer County's most prominent citizens, officials and landowners were arrested, including all of the Judges and county officials. The Grand Jury refused to return a single indictment and the state suffered a humiliating defeat. Action against the citizens was dropped at this point and it cost the Board of Works \$17,000 to repair the damage.



Included in the list of courageous citizens who refused to be intimidated, although there were more than one hundred others, were: J. S. Hartman, Surveyor; Frank Linzee, Clerk of Courts; Joseph Carlin, Sheriff; Fredrick Schroeder, Auditor; L. D. McMahon, Recorder; Benjamin Linzee, Deputy Treasurer; Sam Ruckman, Commissioner; Robert Linzee, Judge; H. Trenary, B. Mowery, Porter Pratt, Elias Miller; Mathias D. Smith, Mr. Allen, Eli Dennison, the John Sunday family, Crockett families, Thomas and Joseph Coate, Mr. Britten and son, A. Milller, Dr. Beauchamp (Montezuma), Matthew Frank, Gary Ellis and Hugh Miller.

Miami and Erie canal traffic, and shipping across the Reservoir which resulted, flourished for many years, but as in all transportation, commerce and utilities, the old must give way to better, faster and more economical methods.

Roads were improved and more were built and soon the long steel spurs of our first narrow gauge railroads moved across the Ohio countryside, seeking out and joining the county seats and most important trade centers.

FISHING AND HUNTING

The waters of Grand Reservoir were no longer churned by slow moving paddle wheels and the long sturdy poles in the hands of muscular, bronzed bargemen. Their plaintive songs, raucous laughter and profanity no longer was carried to the distant shores, and the nesting waterfowls were once more undisturbed in their hideaways. It was in its entirety, the death of an old era and the birth of a new era created by man in his never ending search for betterment.

The waters of the Reservoir in those long past days teemed with a seemingly limitless number of fish. There were no legal restrictions and bass, perch, sunfish and catfish were netted and removed by the barrels full. Farmers salted and preserved them for use during the long, severe winters, while tons were shipped to the city markets.

Hunters plied their precarious course among the stumps and remaining tree trunks that still protruded above the water like huge, gaunt and gnarled fingers. Hundreds of stumps remained hidden below the surface of the water waiting to snare the unwary or careless boatman, not unlike a deadly unmarked shoal in the sea.

All this has been changed and the present day, clear and vast expanse of Grand Lake presents a much different view and surely a safer one for the hundreds of pleasure-bent motor boat enthusiasts that ply its waters.

OILWELLS

During the peak of the strike in the Lima Oil Field, dozens of oil wells were drilled almost in the middle of Grand Lake and for many years they were profitably operated. It was a common sight to see day and night crews shuttling back and forth between the derricks and shore.

ICE HARVESTING

Another successful industry for many years was the harvesting of ice to supply Celina and vicinity. The last person to operate this sort of lake industry was Mike Hemmert of Celina.

Winter closed in tightly during the latter part of November and the thickness of the ice was frequently checked. When it reached 10 to 12 inches in thickness, the cutting and storing was rushed to completion, working 24 hours per day.

During these severe winters, ice would quickly form 20 to 24 inches thick, making it too large for home use.

Changeable winters, with intermittent freezing and thawing brought the end to profitable ice harvesting.

Two other commercial ventures proved financial failures. One, through a state contract, was the seining and shipment of carp to the slum areas of New York and other large cities. The cost of operation proved to be prohibitive.

The other failure was the attempt to locate, raise and salvage the thousands of well preserved and valuable logs of oak, hickory and walnut. The difficulty experienced in locating the logs, doomed the project to failure.

RECREATION

In that long ago period, two recreational pleasures were skating and ice yachting and a select few enjoyed the luxury of motor boats. Skating and ice yachting were then winter-long sports. Almost everyone who lived near the Grand Reservoir owned a pair of skates, from children of seven or eight years to men in their late sixties. Among them were many highly skilled exponents of the flashing steel blades.

Ice yachting was very popular with the young men and dozens of birdlike, graceful yachts could be seen swooping, racing and tacking across the hard, smooth surface of the lake.

Just as climatic changes with variability of temperatures, brought an end to ice harvesting, the era of winter sports on the lake came to a close more than a generation ago.

On the recreational side, two passenger boats plied the waters of Grand Reservoir during the 1890's and early years of 1900 and did a thriving business on week-ends and holidays.

One was a wood burning, double deck, stern wheel steamer, City of Celina which was about 40 feet long. Only a limited number could have choice seats on the top deck, as the queen of the waves was tempermental and inclined to be top-heavy.

Bo-Peep was the other pleasure craft; a trim little boat about 20 feet long; propellor driven and powered by an upright coal-burning boiler and engine.

Because of its heavy draught, the City of Celina occasionally ran afoul of submerged stumps. Being a somewhat unmanueverable craft she was usually helpless until a whistle signal brought little Bo-Peep to the rescue and she see-sawed her big sister off the obstruction.

RIVERS AND CREEKS

The St. Marys River which has much historical background, rises in Auglaize County; passes through Mendon and Rockford and continues its winding course in to the northeast part of Blackcreek Township where it enters Van Wert County. Although explorers, traders, couriers and military men followed its course, its most important historical segment was at the trading post of Shanesville, now Rockford.

The Wabash River famous for its Indian lore is recognized nationally, having been the theme of song, story and poetry. Its source is in what was known as the Cranberry Swamp in Granville Township. Its meandering course passes through Recovery, Washington and the southwest corner of Liberty Township where it enters Indiana. It winds to the lower boundry of Indiana and Illinois and empties into the Ohio River. Thus Mercer County water including overflow from Grand Lake eventually finds its way into the Gulf of Mexico.

Big Beaver Creek rises in Marion Township, flows through Franklin Township to Montezuma where it enters and passes through the western part of Grand Lake, then west to connect with the Wabash River.

Little Beaver Creek has its source southwest of Philothea and enters Big Beaver in Jefferson Township.

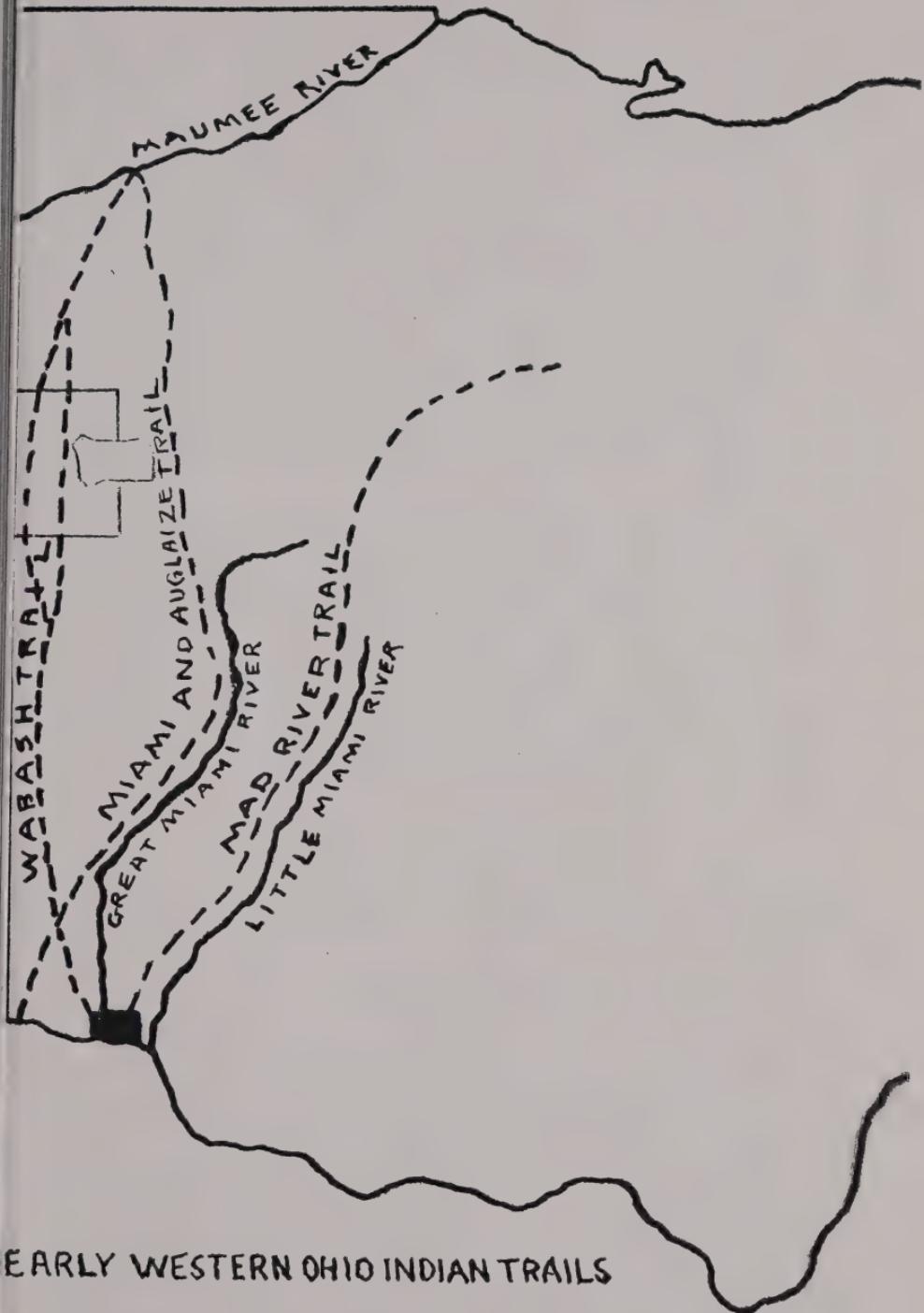
Coldwater Creek rises southeast of Philothea and empties into the southwest corner of Grand Lake at the old waste weir.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The general slope of Mercer County is toward the north. Its entire surface is a continuous plain and its only change in levelness is the glacial drifts left by both the Illinion and Wisconsin ice sheets. There is also a gentle undulation or waviness due to the inclination of the rocky floor underlying it and which belongs to the Silurian Age.

The outcropping rock belongs to the Guelph phase of the Niagara Age, which is limestone. This stone is quarried in considerable quantities by the Karch Stone Company of Celina, the Rockford Stone Company and Matt Schwieterman Inc. Coldwater. It is extensively used in road building and agricultural lime products.

The drift which the Ice Age deposited over Mercer County is chiefly clay which is yellowish or light brown, although below 10 or 12 feet it is blue. With proper drainage and cultivation, Mercer County's soil is highly productive.



The presence of the lower blue clay, which is impervious to water, probably accounts for the fact, that virgin, forest-clad Mercer County as first found by the white man was very damp, some of it swampy, and in fact it was a fringe area of northwestern Ohio's "Great Black Swamp". Artificial drainage and removal of the forests have made it one of the most productive and diversified agricultural counties in the tri-state area.

The low swampy ground that underlies Grand Lake; the Beaver, Wabash and St. Marys lowlands bear out the contention that Mercer County was part of the fearsome Black Swamp area. Another proof was the prevalence of shaking argue and swamp fever. These plagues disappeared after the heavy timber was cleared and systematic drainage of land was undertaken.

Stories told of the clouds of mosquitoes and stinging insects which added torture and harassment to the white men, whether explorers, homeseekers or the military was added proof of this contention. Successively there were failures and disasters in wilderness and morass that was inaccurately charted and mapped because of the difficult terrain.

Elevations above sea level reveal the general downward slope from the southern to the northern part of mercer county. At St. Henry it is 974 feet and at Ft. Recovery 940 feet. This caused the Wabash to seek a westerly course. The downward trend then swung the Wabash into Washington Township.

The same general slope to the north induced the northward flow of a dozen tributaries of Beaver Creek as well as the creeks flowing into the marshland underlying Grand Lake. In the area north of the Wabash, Beaver and Grand Lake, all creeks and tributaries with two exceptions have a general northwardly flow and eventually empty into the St. Marys River.

This fact is readily understood when you consider the elevation above sea level at Mendon is 820 feet and at Rockford is 807 feet. Thus there is a maximum drop of 167 feet between St. Henry and Rockford.

TRANSPORTATION

Railroads

In 1880 three railroads entered Mercer County and crossed its entire area. In 1878 the L. E. & L, later the L. E. & W. and now the Nickle Plate was extended from St. Marys.

In 1880, the Toledo, Delphos and Burlington had a narrow gauge road and terminated at Shanes Crossing (Rockford). In 1881 this road was extended to Mercer, Mendon and Celina.

The Celina council agreed to pay the T. D. & B. \$7,000 upon the arrival of the first train in Celina, going from Versailles to Mercer.

The Delphos, Rockford, Mercer line was discontinued and the balance of the system through Mercer County became the C. H. & D.

Rockford was not to be without a railroad, and soon the C. J. & M., later the Cincinnati Northern and now the New York Central traversed the county north and south.

At the start of the 20th Century when electric railways experienced a great boom, the Western Ohio extended their line to Celina. They done a thriving business for almost 25 years when automobiles became more numerous and electric railway traffic dwindled until operation became unprofitable.

Waterways

In the 1870's a paddle wheel steamer called the "Seventy-Six", and which was 25 feet long plied the waters of Grand Lake, then known as Grand Reservoir. It carried freight and passengers and was commanded by Captain Gustavus Darnold. Freight traffic was good, with the exception of farm produce. Many Mercer County farmers felt that the freight rate was too high and preferred to haul their grain to St. Marys even though it did require an extra day and an over night stay. The opening of the railroad to Celina marked the end of "Seventy-Six."

As early as 1850-51 a paddle wheel steam boat owned by a Dayton man had also done a profitable passenger and freight business. In addition to these steam propelled boats a heavy traffic of timber cargoes was carried on for years by barges which were propelled by men using long poles.

These barges were loaded with logs and ship timbers at the west bank near the foot of Main Street, Celina. The route was to the east shore, then through the feeder canal to the Miami & Erie canal where the cargoes were loaded on canal boats and shipped to Toledo ship builders.

OIL AND GAS FIELDS

The first natural gas wells drilled in Mercer County in 1888 and were sunk on vacant lots in Celina. This venture was undertaken by a company of Celina citizens to provide better illumination for the village, and brought the candle and coal oil lamp era to an end.

A contract was signed by the village council authorizing the Celina Light and Fuel Co. to furnish 1,000,000 cubic feet of gas annually for five years. The officers of this pioneering utility company were Gideon LeBlond, president and J. D. Johnson, secretary.

The supply of gas soon dwindled and the wells were abandoned. Soon, a large field in Franklin Township was ready for private and commercial use and gas was piped from there. When this field weakened, it was necessary to bring natural gas from increasingly greater distances during the following years.

During the latter part of the 19th and start of the 20th Centuries, Mercer county was on the southwestern limits of the Lima oil field which extended north of Findlay, Ohio. Being at the edge of this

great oil pool, the production of Mercer County wells as individual units was much less than the hundreds of heavy producers in the northeast.

Quite a few of Mercer County's wells came in at 40 to 60 barrels per day and a few exceeded 100 barrels for limited times. Boyd Anderson, living east of Celina, a veteran oil operator is authority for the statement that a 180 barrel gusher was brought in near Chickasaw and a 200 barrel producer was located on what is now the Northmoor Golf Course and in the approximate area of the number 7 green.

During the early days of Mercer County's quest for wealth giving oil, derricks silhouetted the sky line in many directions and the odor of crude petroleum was in the air. The first well drilled in the county was northeast of Mendon, but soon wildcatters, drillers and landowners, with a driving urge to find underground riches, brought operations to most parts of Mercer County, resulting in many unwise ventures and dry holes.

Today, a few wells periodically and slowly draw a few barrels of the elusive black gold from the bowels of the earth. They are the last gurgling gasps of a dynasty that probable seemed to promise much, then faded into mediocrity, and today is but a feeble ghost of the past.

THE CHOPPING BEE

Except for a number of acres cleared for the erection of buildings, and where roads were cut, Celina, when laid out was wet, swampy and unhealthful. There was natural drainage, but the dense canopy of towering oak, beech, elm, ash, hickory, and walnut trees effectively repelled the sun's rays filtering through and drying out the ground.

In an effort to overcome this handicap, the Rileys' decided to have a mammoth "chopping bee" and sent out scores of invitations to participate. Fort Recovery musicians were employed for a grand dance, and from Piqua, two barrels of whiskey were shipped along with tableware, buckets etc. Throughout the day everyone was served eggnog, sandwiches and doughnuts.

That night a grand feast and dance were the features and among the delicacies were venison, wild turkey, roast pig and chicken prepared by the ladies.

The woodsmen were divided into groups of 15 or 20 men, each under a leader. Trees were selected in rows and cut nearly through, but allowed to stand. Another row was cut completely and felled. This last row, in falling carried the first row. Each of the other rows in succession were felled in a like manner.

The deafening crash of many hundreds of these huge virgin trees was said to have been heard in St. Marys.

The woodsmen started their task at what is now Market and Buckeye streets and felled all the timber to the south and west lines of the town's plat. The largest tree that fell to the ax was a mammoth white oak, measuring 8 feet and 4 inches in diameter and stood near the corner of Warren and Sugar streets. It was 60 feet up to the first limb. Wilshire Riley asked the men to save this proud monarch, however the exuberant axmen would not be denied the honor of bringing it to earth and it fell before the assault of eight woodsmen working on four sides of it.

With passing of the "forest primeval" the deep mud was dried by the smiling sun. Sanitary and health conditions were bettered and young Celina could flex its sinews and expand.

MILITARY HISTORY

According to the best available records, seven of Mercer County's pioneers had previously served during the War of 1812. A Mr. Berry, Joseph Watt, Michael Harner, James Coe, William Franklin, James Q. Grimes and William Preston.

Mr. Grimes, great grandfather of Ralph Jordan, Celina was at Fort McHenry in 1812 when it was shelled by the British and at the time Francis Scott Keyes wrote the Star Spangled Banner.

It is a unique fact that the above William Preston's three sons served in the Union Army during the Civil War, he also at the age of 72 years was a member of Company C, 118th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

Records of the Mexican War, 1848 are not available and the only Mercer County man who served in this short conflict, of which the writer has knowledge, was John McChristy of Dublin township. This information was vouched for by John H. Wiley of Rockford who was personally acquainted with Mr. McChristy.

CIVIL WAR

According to the available records based the rosters of various companies, 507 Mercer County men served in the Union Army. Owing to the mustering out of one company and the re-assignment of men, some names appear on two rosters. This fact reduces the total to about 450 men.

The men were divided as follows: Company I, 17th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Captain William D. Sloan, First Lieutenant Preston R. Galloway, Second Lieutenant David J. Roop and 89 enlisted men.

Company K, 40th Regiment, O. V. I., Captain Alexander A. Knapp, 1st Lieutenant David J. Roop, 2nd Lieutenant Byron Ballen and 99 men. This was the first Company raised in Mercer County and was recruited at Fort Recovery. Some of these men were formerly in Co. I, 17th O. V. I. above.

Company H, 71st Regiment O. V. I. Captain G. LeBlond, 1st Lieutenant J. N. Hetzler, 2nd Lieutenant Alex Gable and 95 men.

Company C, 118th Regiment O. V. I. Captain William D. Stone, 2nd Lieutenant John S. Rhodes and 49 men.

The 165th Regiment National Guard included Captain C. B. Collins, 1st Lieutenant Daniel Brookhart, 2nd Lieutenant Thomas Spangler and 46 men.

A total of 129 men saw service in various other regiments in other sections of the country.

SPANISH AMERICAN WAR

The war with Spain lasted only from April 21 to December 10, 1898 when a peace treaty was concluded. Only a few thousand men involved, reached the front, exclusive of the Navy which was small but efficient.

For these reasons it is completely overshadowed by other American wars and generally thought of as a comparatively unimportant conflict. William Jennings Bryan, one of our greatest orators and peace advocates, however, described it not from a viewpoint of bigness and scope but from a humanitarian and altruistic angle. He classed it as "A Great War."

The offer of volunteer companies swamped the Ohio Adjutant General's office, but few could be accepted. Unlike all other wars, Ohio soldiers had a mere taste of fighting. Only three of Ohio's regiments saw foreign service. Their total losses were seven officers and 23 men and practically all of them were from disease.

It is doubtful if a dozen men from Mercer County were accepted for service, although many young men tried to volunteer. The only ones of which the writer is certain were Dr. I. J. Ransbottom who enlisted as a private but was transferred to the Medical Corps as a surgeon. Russell and Samuel Armstrong, sons of Judge S. A. Armstrong. The fourth was a son of Rev. Carter pastor of St. Pauls Methodist church, Celina.

WORLD WAR I

The number of young men from Mercer County who served in World War I is not available in official records at county or state levels. Efforts to secure government figures were fruitless. Based upon the best information obtainable it is thought in excess of 900 young men enter the armed services either through the draft or voluntary enlistment.

The vast majority of these were inducted into the service. A small number were enlistees and probably about 25 were already members of or enlisted in various National Guard units which later became the 37th Division. A total of about 60 were killed or died in the service. Other casualty figures are not available.



Ft. Recovery Stockade

An air field and flying school was a Mercer County contribution to the World War I cause. It was located about five miles north of Celina on the east side of U. S. Highway 127, and was established by B. Ward Beam, a local auto race driver and barn-storming stunt flyer.

Quite a number of pilots were trained there before and after our entrance into the war, April 6, 1917, a large majority of which were of Canadian and other foreign birth.

Among the instructors was Billie Brock, an American and later widely known in aviation circles. He served with honors in the United States Air Force.

Monte Rolfe, a handsome, slender young Canadian trained here and was later killed in air battle in France. Another young student pilot, also a foreigner and native of Belgium and whose name the writer cannot recall, also lost his life in France.

The planes used at the field were typical of that day—the flimsy bi-plane (two wings) pusher type, having the motor and propellor mounted at the rear, while the pilot sat at the extreme front in a fragile framework seat. In case of a motor conk-out or crash landing, the pilot was almost certain to be the first to crash into the ground or be crushed when the motor tore loose from its flimsy mounting and possibly be the victim of both hazards.

WORLD WAR II

In World War II approximately 2016 persons from Mercer County entered the armed forces and at least 69 are known to have been killed or died in the service. Other casualty figures are not available. This information was secured from the Ohio Selective Service headquarters at Columbus and is based on World War II bonus records. Service was scattered over countless numbers of units, hence the numbers in each cannot be given.

KOREAN WAR

From the same source as above, it is learned that 1025 from Mercer County entered the service during the official dates June 25, 1950 to July 19, 1953. An unknown number of others also served during this time and are not included in the above number, having entered the service prior to the beginning date of the Korean conflict.

Mercer County's casualties were 4 dead and 11 wounded.

FIRST OFFICIALS

Below are the first officials that served the citizens of Mercer County, and the years of their election.

State Senator, David F. Heaton, 1824-25. Thomas J. Godfrey, Celina was the first State Senator from Mercer County. He served the District from 1866-68.

The first Mercer County Representative in the Ohio Legislature was Justin Hamilton who served in 1831-32 and again in 1838 and 1841. Actually the first State Representative was John M. Gray, however, he was not from Mercer County. This was when Mercer County was first established and embraced the area of what is now several surrounding counties.

Joseph H. Crane, 1829-39 was the first Congressional Representative from this district. Francis C. LeBlond, Celina was the first Mercer County man elected to Congress. He served from 1863-67.

The first Judge of the Court of Common Ples was J. Walcott, 1824. The first Associate Judges were Thomas Scott and Joseph Green, 1825.

James Watson Riley was the first to serve as Clerk of Courts, 1824-40, while William B. Hedges in 1824 was the first Auditor. Riley again appeared as a first in 1825, this time as recorder.

William L. Blocher became the first Probate Judge in 1852. Five men served as Commissioners in 1824, David Hays, Solomon Carr, Thomas Scott, James Vanarsdol and Ansel Blossom.

W. H. Hinkle in 1825 was the first elected Sheriff while W. I. Thomas in 1824 was the first Prosecuting Attorney. The same year J. P. Hedges was Treasurer. Justin Hamilton served as treasurer three terms, 1827, 1835 and 1837. S. D. McMahon in 1837 was the first Coroner.

EARLY COURT PROCEDURE

When the estates of deceased persons were administrated in the Mercer County courts of 75 to 100 years ago, the procedure differed from that of today when the entire matter is under the jurisdiction of the Probate Court.

In the days of our forefathers, the entire matter was processed in the Common Pleas Court. If it was the estate of an individual, a complete inventory of the smallest assets along with any indebtedness was filed. The following is an example.

The John Carter estate listed a sorrel gelding at \$35; bridle cow \$8.00; three calves \$3.00 each; one white hog \$2.00; six shoats 50 cents each; broadax \$1.00; plow \$2.37½; pitchfork 25 cents; beadstead 37½ cents; whiskey barrel 37½ cents.

In other estates sheep were listed at \$1.25 a head; a feather bed at \$7.00 indicating that it was a prized luxury and was probably brought from the east in a covered wagon. Bacon was appraised at 5 cents per pound. Among indebtedness was found promissary notes and interest totaling \$2.11, \$3.13 and \$4.00.

When the decedent had been engaged in some form of business, his ledger or day book as it was called then was used in settling of accounts due the estate. Many of these pages were yellow-

ed and tattered and are difficult to decipher because of faded ink, poor writing and spelling.

These are typical of items listed in the accounts of pioneer merchants. Plug tobacco 10c; lead pencil 5c; candle stick 15c; 2 drinks beer 10c; 1 pair shoes \$2.25; 1 pint whiskey 35c; 1 pint vinegar 5c.

One pioneer merchant whose name could be determined entered both debits and credits in one column. This is a 100 year old account.

John Fisher account 1858

Dr. Wheat 5 bu., 45 lbs.	3.25
Dr. Pork	2.00
Cr. Plowing 3 days, 2 hrs.	1.75
Cr. Splitting rails, 7 days	4.25
Cr. Cradling 5 days	3.75
Cr. Hauling wheat, $\frac{1}{2}$ day	.37
Dr. Pork	.75
Dr. Tobacco, 4 twists	.60
Dr. 1 sow and pig	3.00

Settled up this account Jan. 1, 1859.

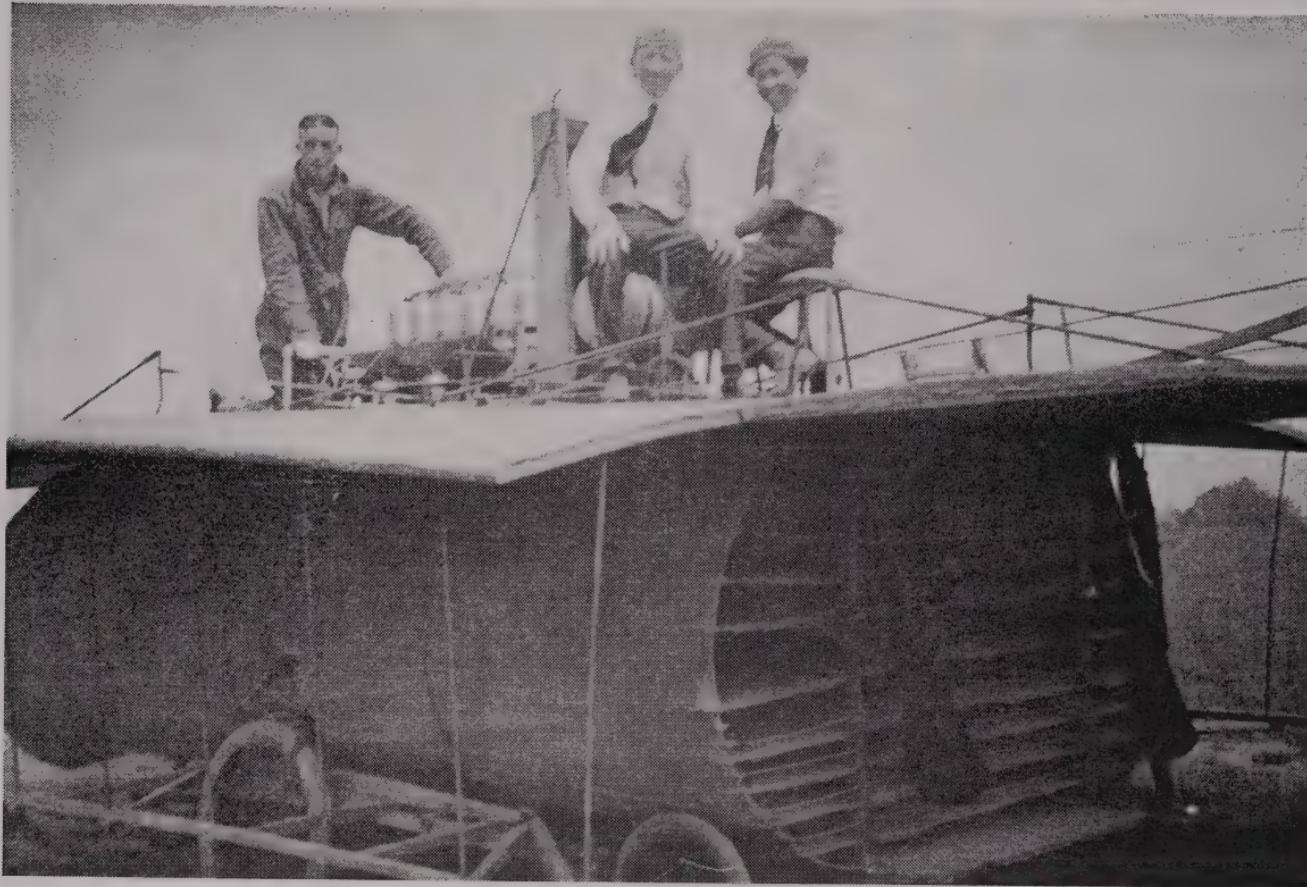
Another early court function was revealed in a book that was titled: "Record of Strays, 1839-40. It was certified record of farm animals which had strayed from their owners and were found and harbored by others. This matter was handled by a Justice of the Peace when he was notified by the finder. The stray was taken in custody by a constable and held pending official notification by the Justice.

When a stray animal was claimed by the owner he was assessed the prescribed court costs and harboring expense of the finder. This is a recording of a stray ox.

Blackcreek, January 10, 1840. Report to Joseph Davis, J. P. Taken up by Thomas Odel, large red ox with white feet, some white on under part, crop, (cut) of left ear. A slit in the right ear and branded with letter H on the near horn. Bush end of tail is off. Ox was appraised at \$19 by Albert Stacy and George Clark.

Another legal process was revealed in miscellaneous court files. It was the procedure necessary for claiming bounties for wolf scalps. Here is one as recoreded.

State of Ohio, Mercer County. Personally came Michael Harner and being sworn and saith that the wolf scalp now produced by him, is the scalp of a wolf taken and killed by him within 20 days last past, within the county of Mercer, and he verily believes the same to have been over six months of age and that he has not spared the life of any she wolf within his powers to kill with a design to increase the breed. Signed Michael Harner. O. A. Rod, Deputy Clerk, March 5, 1840.



Beery's Flying Machine

FIRST CHURCHES

Robert Findley, a retired Methodist minister organized the Celina Circuit churches in 1829. This mission included a class at Twelve Mile, (southeast of Mendon) the forerunner of Hamilton-Bethel, and a class at Shanes Prairie.

The Bethel congregation under the leadership of George Parrot established the first church in Mercer County in a log house. The Revs. John Wood and Abraham Miller were the first missionaries sent to serve this Circuit.

The first Roman Catholic church in Mercer County had its inception in the Minster Church which was inaugurated in 1832 by Father Horstman who was a professor. Father Horstman soon after conducted services in southeastern Mercer County homes, the principle one of which was probably the home of Mr. Worke in Marion township.

In 1837 priests from the Minster church established St. John's church at St. Johns, which was a log structure. St. Rosa's, St. Joseph's and St. Henry's followed the next three years. St. Alvis Church at Carthagena is credited with having been founded in 1836.

The first Church of God was organized at Berry's, two miles north of Celina in 1858 by Elder Dodson.

The Presbyterian church under the leadership of Rev. J. N. Taylor was founded in Celina in 1840. The Lutheran Evangelical congregation held service in this church 1853 and built their first church in 1863.

St. Pauls Evangelical Luthern Church, Liberty township was organized in 1841 by Rev. Frederick Knabe. Today it is St. Paul's Evangelical Reformed.

The U. B. Church at Montezuma was another pioneer congregation, having been organized in 1845 by Rev. R. Gillen, while the Disciples church in Montezuma was founded by Rev. Joshua Swallow in 1842.

Rev. James Loy founded the U. B. church at Twelve Mile, Center township in 1850. The Baptist church at Neptune was inaugurated by Rev. Blodgett in 1860.

The first Celina Methodist congregation was founded in 1838 which makes it the third oldest church body in the county.

Zion Evangelical Lutheran congregation, Liberty township withdrew from St. Paul's, organized and built their church in 1860 and now is the oldest Lutheran congregation.

While mentioning church and congregational firsts the name of Rev. William Funson should be included. According to the available records Rev. Funson was the first ordained pastor that was licensed to solemnize marriages, which was December 19, 1820, long before there was even organized services in homes or benefit of circuit riding missionaries.

FIRST SCHOOLS

Mercer County's earliest educators were not professional teachers, but were a select few, who because of their talents and training, offered their services or were recruited from such professions as the ministry, law, civil engineering, etc.

It is believed, on the basis of available records, that the first school conducted in Mercer County was in Shanesville, now Rockford. However the first school building of record was a one room log structure erected in Union township in 1827. Justin Hamilton was the first teacher and his salary was \$10.00 per month.

Records are incomplete concerning the first schools built in the various townships. It appears however, from available sources that a log school at Oldtown, east of Celina on what is now State Route 29, and built in 1832 was the third one in Mercer County.

This building was on a part of a tract of land given by Robert Linzee in 1826 and to be used for school and burial purposes only. To those who have wondered why this lot adjoining Oldtown cemetery has remained unused and weed covered through the years, this is the reason.

Other recorded dates include 1838 when Rev. Timothy Hanks taught the first school in Center township in a room of James Thompson's home. In the same year, Miss Montgomery was probably Washington Township's first teacher. She received \$6.00 for the term.

In 1840, Blackcreek township's first school was built. Coldwater followed in 1848 and Fort Recovery erected their first building in 1854.

Celina's first school session was held in the Presbyterian church, southeast corner of Fayette and Ash streets. Two teachers were employed during winter months, one when the weather was warmer.

A few years later a one room school was built at the southwest corner of Walnut and Fulton streets. In 1856 it collapsed. Fortunately this was on Sunday when it was unoccupied. The Presbyterian church was again used for classes until 1859 when the collapsed building was rebuilt and enlarged to four rooms. In 1874 it was increased to 12 rooms and later came to be known as the old west school building. It was condemned and torn down in 1906.

We have cited the formation and advancement of the early Celina school system because its records are more complete. Its struggles vividly portrays the problems of all of the schools in Mercer County in assuming their rightful places in the educational, cultural and economic advancement of our citizenry.

In 1847 the Akron Law was passed by the legislature, which authorized the establishment of city or village school systems, separate and apart from township jurisdiction.

An elective Board of Education was enabled to fix salaries and certify the amount of money that was necessary for school purposes. The city or village councils were compelled to make the necessary levies. This was the first important step in the advancement of our public school system.

In 1849 another law was passed which embodied the important and essential features of the Akron Law, and in addition, granted power not only to establish primary and grade schools, but also a higher grade. This was the birth of our High Schools.

Authority was also granted to decide what branches of study should be taught.

High Schools faced very much opposition during those formative years and as a result, their progress was slow. There were those who believed in the sufficiency of the so called basic "Three R's". This segment of our citizenry classed High Schools as "Frills", "Educational Luxuries" and "Places to Develop Snobs."

The first Superintendent of the Celina schools was Dow Carlin who was assisted by Sue Timmonds and Susan Riley, and at that time the pupils were required to furnish their own desks and chairs.

In 1866, S. F. DeFord, Superintendent was paid \$100 per month; his assistant received \$40, while the grade teachers' salary was \$30 and the janitor was paid \$15. The first graduate of Celina High School in May, 1878 was the late Mrs. Lizzie Snyder McKim.

The Mercer County Historical Society has in their Museum, a perfectly preserved Program of the Seventh Annual Commencement of Celina High School which was held at Touvelle's Opera House, now known as the Lininger building, Friday evening, May 30th, 1884. There were seven graduates. Carrie Sidenbender, Lou Beam, Florence Roop, Carrie Snyder, Nellie Brandon, R. J. Wyckoff and Samuel Pumphrey.

Through the years the High School program throughout Mercer County has been enlarged until now it includes vocational agriculture, industrial art, fine arts, music, physical education and commercial courses.

Aside from this program, provisions have been in our schools for special education and training for those whose physical and mental attributes vary from the normal youth. This includes those with defective eyesight and hearing, mental maladjustment, physical handicaps, speech impediments and those who are victims of illness and disease.

Surely the plans for higher education have made giant and invaluable advances since the day they were decried and labeled as Frills and an unnecessary waste of money.



Mound Builders' Enclosure, Union Township

COLLEGES

St. Charles Seminary, Motherhouse of the Society of the Precious Blood in the United States is located on U. S. Highway 127 at Carthagena in Marion township, seven miles south of Celina.

The Motherhouse was founded in 1861 when Emlen Institute, an abandoned manual training school for negro youths was purchased and remodeled. A new building was erected and dedicated in 1922 and is one of the most beautiful and imposing structures in the tri-state area.

The six years of study in theology and philosophy at St. Charles, which prepares the young men for the Priesthood is preceded by preparedness study at Canton, Ohio; two years at St. Joseph's College at Collegeville, Ind. and one year at St. Marys Novitiate, north of Burkettsville in Granville township.

April 29, 1958, a \$500,000 addition to the Seminary was completed and dedicated with Archbishop Karl J. Alter, officiating.

In 1882, the tiny hamlet of Coldwater was proud to include a College or Normal School in its educational facilities. It was destroyed by fire in 1896.

Several years preceding the First World War, the Celina Business College was located in the Odd Fellows building on West Market street, now the First National Annex.

Raymond Wilson, Celina High School 1908, now a retired Public Accountant at Piqua was one of the instructors. Pending threat of war hastened the close of this school.

The story of early schools would not be complete without mentioning a tiny Medical School which was housed in a large log house at Macedon on State Route 219, six miles west of Coldwater almost a century ago and which was discontinued sometime during the 1870's. The exact year is unknown, however the building of huge square hand hewn logs, now sagging into decay still stands on the north side of the highway. This was one of the first medical schools in the middle west.

LIBRARIES

Coldwater

The Coldwater Public Library was founded in 1936 when a group of civic minded citizens in a series of meetings, provided the funds for establishing a municipally controlled Library. It first occupied a small room in the city hall and had 404 volumes.

The Coldwater Library is one of the few municipally owned and operated libraries in the United States and its growth from the start has been sound and rapid.

In 1938 when it had outgrown its quarters it was moved to much larger space in the old city hall building. This followed the erection of a new and modern city hall.

On the shelves of the Coldwater Library a total of 16,000 volumes are now available to the public. The Librarian is Miss Mildred Sutter.

Rockford

In January, 1902 a number of Rockford women under the leadership of Mrs. W. F. Barbour, established a Free Public Library. Dues of \$1.00 per year together with the proceeds derived from socials, markets and other functions provided the finances.

In 1903 a room secured and equipped through aid of the Ohio State Library. Later the village council provided financial help, and Mrs. D. C. Kinder served without cost as the Librarian.

In 1913, Andrew Carnegie approved a donation for the erection of a building, and today the Rockford Public Library is one of the best equipped that can be found in any town of comparable size.

When the Library was first opened there were 250 volumes and today 16,252 books are available.

Mrs. Ethel McSherry is the Librarian.

FORT RECOVERY LIBRARY

In 1928 the Business and Professional Women's Club of Fort Recovery with the aid of some financial support, started the Fort Recovery Library.

In 1931 it was organized under the School Board Plan and thereafter made rapid progress. It is now located in the museum building near the Stockade on Old Fort Street.

The first annual report showed a circulation total of 5,190 volumes, whereas in 1957 the total books borrowed was 65,078.

Mrs. Fay Hart is serving her 17th year as president of the Library Board of Trustees and Miss Lois Amstutz and Mrs. Wanda Bontrager are co-Librarians.

CELINA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Credit for the establishment of Celina's Public Library belongs to the Shakespere Club. Their first meeting concerning the project was held in 1897 and their early fund raising was by sponsoring series of cultural entertainment known as the Lecture Course, markets and socials.

Later the History and Altrurian Clubs rendered much service in a drive for funds to buy a building site.

In January, 1904, Andrew Carnegie responded to the united appeal of the three Clubs and a group of citizens, and donated \$12,000 for the construction of a Library. It was formally opened January 1, 1907. Miss Myrtle Crockett was the first Librarian.

During the five years from 1953 to 1958 the Celina Lions Club have made an outstanding contribution to the Library, giving \$5,000 for its improvement and purchase of books.

Today the Celina Library ranks as one of the most complete and efficiently conducted of all small libraries. On its shelves are 25,563 volumes.

The Board of Trustees is: C. A. Stubbs, president; Judge Paul Dull, vice president; H. C. Bowman, secretary-treasurer; Miss Kathryn Cook (one of the original founders); Mrs. Walter Bernard; Mrs. Parker Snyder and Charles Gant. Mrs. Fred Weitz is Librarian and Jackie Schmidt, assistant.

HOSPITALS

Gibbons Hospital, Celina

When Dr. John T. Gibbons was discharged from the Medical Corps in 1919 as a First Lieutenant, his first concern was the expansion of hospital facilities. He built a 13 room brick building at 117 East Fayette Street which contained his offices and a number of private rooms for patients.

Several other expansions followed and the latest addition has increased the facilities to 48 beds.

Ill health caused Dr. Gibbons to retire from active management and the hospital is now under the direction of his son John C. Gibbons.

Otis Hospital, Celina

In 1914, Dr. L. M. Otis of Celina founded Mercer County's first hospital. It had four beds and was located at 113 North Walnut Street. In 1915 he purchased the Charles Carlin home on East Market Street and remodeled it to meet the needs of a hospital containing four beds.

Later changes and improvements increased the facilities until the last addition was completed in January, 1955, the capacity was brought to 29 beds.

Failing health caused the retirement of Dr. L. M. Otis and the hospital is now under the direction of his son Dr. James L. Otis.

Mercy Hospital, Coldwater

Interest in founding a hospital in Coldwater was first aroused in 1942, but it was not until near the close of the war in 1945 that the project was revived and the Coldwater Mercy Hospital Association was incorporated.

The Catholic order, the Sisters of Mercy agreed to equip and operate a hospital if one was financed and constructed. Industries, business men and other citizens responded liberally and \$390,000 was raised in three fund drives.

Mercy Hospital is located on a 10 acre site at the west edge of Coldwater and the cornerstone was laid in 1950. Today Mercy Hospital is equipped in a most modern manner and has 40 beds and 19 basinettes.



Macedon Medical School

INDUSTRY

We are using the term Industry to include the broad field of employment as it applies to the present day status. Early industry is covered in the separate township and town histories which are in this volume.

Mercer County industry and manufacturing is exceptionally well diversified and has long been known for its economic stability and strength.

Mersman Brothers' Corporation

Throughout the United States, the stores of New York City and other metropolitan areas or in the smaller rural towns, the name Mersman on tables is recognized as a mark of high quality, style and craftsmanship. This honor has belonged to Celina made tables for more than a half century.

In 1899, J. B. Mersman of Ottoville, Ohio, founder of Mersman Brothers' Corporation, came to Celina seeking a site for a furniture factory. September 28, 1899, the village council granted him \$7,500 to apply on the cost of a site and building.

Thus was born what is today, the world's largest factory exclusively manufacturing tables of all kinds.

Walter J. Mersman, 84, president of the Corporation is the last surviving member of the firm of father and three sons. A man of deep humanitarian traits and of philanthropic nature he has done much for his community that is unknown to the general public.

A monument to this civic minded man is the Mersman swimming pool and recreational area on West Market Street which he presented to the community and which was named in his honor by the city of Celina.

The Mersman factory has 425,000 square feet of floor space and the site is approximately equal to six city blocks. The average number of employees is 600 and the plant capacity is more than 2,000 tables of all kinds per day, or between 500,000 and 600,000 per year. Distribution covers every state in the Union and also Canada.

Stokley-Van Camp Co.

The forerunner of the present Stokley-Van Camp canning factory was founded in 1901 by Ira J. Crampton of Indiana. For many years it was known as Crampton & Son and they processed tomatoes and peas exclusively.

From the founding date until his death in an explosion at the plant, Carl a son was associated with his father. A son-in-law, the late L. A. Sharp was also a member of the company until 1925 when he founded the Rockford Canning Co.

In 1927 a reorganization with new stockholders changed the corporation name to Crampton Canneries, Inc.

In 1944 a merger was effected and the Crampton Canneries became a part of the Stokley-Van Camp Co. of which Herbert Kreimendahl a former Celina boy is now president.

There are now two plant locations in Celina, one processing pickles of all kinds and the other canning asparagus, tomatoes and tomato products. The average acreage planted is tomatoes 425 and asparagus 225.

Celina Manufacturing Co.

The Celina Manufacturing Co. succeeded the Zimmerman Mfg. Co. of Auburn, Indiana. They took over their assets and patents and started operation in the old Lock Factory, Entreprise Street in Celina, now occupied by the Weber Electric Co.

The company was capitalized at \$25,000 and their products were wind mills, pumps and tanks. The first officers were: Dr. J. E. Hattery, president, Philip Beiersdorfer, vice president, C. S. Younger, secretary and Henry Lennartz, treasurer. Other incorporators were Wm. J. Maehlman, J. S. Springer and H. D. Pierce.

The present plant was built in 1930 and the officers are: Russell Hattery, president and general manager and E. Kreimendahl, secretary and treasurer.

Their products today are galvanized steel tanks, stock feeders and fountains, septic tanks, portable laundry tubs and oil tanks.

Reynolds and Reynolds

In February, 1948, the Reynolds & Reynolds Co. of Dayton, Ohio, manufacturers of printed forms and systems and specializing in automobile dealer forms, opened a branch factory in Celina. The original plant contained 35,000 square feet of floor space and employed 75 persons.

Under the direction of Lester R. Thompson who became plant manager in 1951, the company has made rapid and substantial growth and many new products have been added to the line. Envelopes and carbon paper are manufactured; multiple posting forms printed and special business forms designed for the trade.

Today the floor space has been tripled to 105,000 square feet and employment has risen to 275. The Celina branch is noted for its exceptionally successful management-labor as well as public relationship.

The parent Company was originated in 1866 and has plants in Dayton (home office), Dallas, Los Angeles and Celina.

Huffman Manufacturing Co.

The newest and also one of the fastest growing of Mercer County's industries is the Huffman Manufacturing Co. of Celina which had its start in September, 1955. The parent company in Dayton was founded in 1933 by H. F. Huffman.

The original products were bicycles and service station equipment, but expanding business necessitated the removal of the latter line, and the building of the Celina factory where bicycles and

rotary power lawn mowers are made under the trade name of Huffy.

Their market is nation-wide through distributors and also five large companies who market Huffy bicycles and mowers under their own trade names.

The average number on the payroll is 235 and the plant produces from 600 to 800 bicycles or 700 to 750 power mowers per day. Production of these two lines is arranged so that there is very little seasonal employment fluctuation during the year.

The first expansion of the Huffman Company was in 1957 when the assets and patents of the Monarch bicycle and mower factory in Chicago were purchased and their facilities absorbed by the Celina plant.

The factory is located on a 37 acre tract east of Celina and has 95,000 square feet of floor space. A. C. Lachstadter is the Plant Manager.

New Idea, Inc. (Avco)

Joseph Oppenheim of Maria Stein was school teacher with a vision beyond his daily duties in the class room. He was concerned with the fact that at times many of his boys were kept at home to help with the slow and tiresome task of spreading manure from wagons.

Later while watching a game of town ball in the school yard he noticed that when the ball was struck by the paddle at an angle it was deflected to one side and this gave birth to an idea that lead to the first New Idea Manure Spreader.

With the help of his eldest son, B. C. Oppenheim, he removed the end from an ordinary cigar box and built in a rotary paddle distributor with blades set at an angle. Chaff was used in the simulated wagon box and when the distributor was turned, the chaff distributed evenly, convincing Mr. Oppenheim that his idea was practical.

More experiments followed and in 1899 a small factory was built. Months of experiment and tests brought criticism and discouragement, but the idea was sound and from a production of two spreaders the first year the business grew and in 1910, the plant was moved to Coldwater.

Soon a transplanter was added to the line and later a husker shredder and the first successful two-row corn picker.

In 1945, New Idea was purchased by the Avco Manufacturing Corporation and has taken its place as a leader in the manufacture of farm equipment. Today the complete line includes spreaders, transplanters, hydraulic loaders, portable elevators, picker-shellers, corn pickers, mowers, shredders, fertilizer spreaders and seeders, hay rakes and steel farm wagons.

Under a recent \$5,000,000 expansion program, New Idea now occupies 43 acres of which 16½ acres are under roof and 1,500 employees are on the payroll.

Pax Steel Products, Inc.

One of Mercer County's newest industries is the Pax Steel Products, Inc. at Coldwater, founded in 1947 by William Pax, Norbert Smith, Bartel Desch and Henry Knapke.

Their principal products are hog and turkey feeders and waterers, which includes all-weather automatic waterers to provide water at the proper temperatures.

Mr. Pax was the originator of the round, door-type feeders which permit greater feeding space.

Steel awnings is another product of the Pax Corporation and fabrication is in a second factory on U. S. Route 127 south of Celina, thus permitting further expansion of other products in the Coldwater factory.

Pet Milk Company

The Pet Milk plant at Coldwater was started November 26, 1928 after several years of negotiations between Coldwater business men and the Pet Milk Company, St. Louis.

Success was achieved when the businessmen guaranteed to provide 25,000 pounds of milk per day for the first 30 days. They provided an average of 26,013 pounds and since that time there has been a constant expansion.

Today the site comprises 10 acres and the plant employs 75 people. Approximately 1,000 farms are served within a 35 mile radius.

Each day an average of four car loads of Pet Evaporated Milk is shipped from the Coldwater plant and each year an average of 500,000 gallons of ice cream mix is produced.

Buckeye Overall Company

The Buckeye Overall Company was founded in Versailles, Ohio by L. J. Gulliot and in November, 1916 opened a branch factory in Coldwater. Their sole product was overalls and 16 Coldwater employees were trained in the Versailles plant.

In 1936 the factory had been increased to 23,000 square feet of floor space and today it is approximately 38,000 square feet and the average number of employees is 85 to 90.

Overalls are no longer made and the sole product is boys' semi-dress or school pants. The average daily production is 125 dozen pairs and the capacity of the factory is several times that number.

Sharp Canning Company

The late L. A. Sharp, at one time associated with his father-in-law I. E. Crampton in the canning business in Celina, founded the Sharp Canning Company at Rockford in 1925. In 1930, expanding business necessitated the erection of a second factory at Ohio City, which produces bottled catsup exclusively and employs 65 people in canning season.

The Rockford plant processes tomatoes in cans which is the shelf variety found in stores and also catsup in the industrial size No. 10 cans for institutional and restaurant use. Their minimum employment during canning season is 175, mostly women.

In addition to the 240 people employed in the two plants, 200 Mexicans, either native-born Texans or naturalized citizens are on the payroll during the growing season and care for the crop, exclusive of planting and cultivating.

Plant manager Richard Sharp, son of the founder and Mrs. Lola Sharp, Celina stated that the combine production of the two factories is approximately 100,000 cases or 5,000,000 packages.

Tu-Way Products Co.

Another Rockford industry is the Tu-Way Products Co., manufacturers of dry dust mops, exclusively. The executive offices are in Detroit and the Rockford plant was established in November, 1943.

Tu-Way produces both cotton and nylon mops ranging in size from the ordinary 12 inch to large bowling alley mops wide enough to cover the alley and two gutters.

The wide acceptance of the Tu-Way mops is evidenced by the fact that they are distributed in each of the 49 states and eight foreign countries.

Gerlach Elevator Company

In 1945 Joseph Gerlach first started building farm elevators at North Star and in 1951 moved his shop to St. Henry.

Expanding business and plans to add new equipment to the line necessitated the removal to another site and a new factory was built northeast of Fort Recovery.

Today the Gerlach name is found on farm and commercial elevators, steel wagon grain beds, broadcasters for seed and fertilizers and overhead corn conveyors. Specially designed elevators are made for restaurants and super markets.

Sales are made throughout United States and Canada, thru company salesmen, distributors and dealers.

Fort Recovery Industries, Inc.

The forerunner of the Fort Recovery Industries, Inc. was the Fort Recovery Stirrup Co. founded in 1895 by Edward Koch.

For years the sole product was stirrups of the finest quality and hundreds of thousands of them were sold for civilian use and to the United States Cavalry.

In 1945, George Jetter, now president purchased the company and at that time there were nine employees. Today the Fort Recovery Industries employs about 75 persons in their modern plant built in 1954.

Die castings and brass castings are now important products along with saddle stirrups. Novelty items made from stirrups such as table lamps with a stirrup base have a ready market.

Beckman-Gast Canning Co.

St. Henry's leading industry is the Beckman-Gast Canning Co., processors of tomatoes, green beans and turtle soup. Their con-

tracted acreage in tomatoes is 350 and green beans, 250, and in canning season employs an average of 150 persons.

The labor of caring for the crops is by negroes, the majority of whom are from Arkansas.

The present owners acquired the business from Ben Mackey in 1928, however the founding company lends a unique background to the industry. It was the Pioneer Canning Company, which was in fact, a pioneer in making cereal. They processed and canned a product known as Warvel's Whole Wheat.

Miscellaneous Industry

There are many smaller companies producing a diversified range of products in Mercer County.

In Celina, is the Baker Electric Co.; Martz Cabinet Co.; Pratt Bros. and Boice, concrete tile and block; John W. Karch Stone Co.; Kessler Builders; Amstutz Hatcheries; Heffner Road Contractors; Hinton Construction Co., road contractors; Ayers Asphalt Paving; Speicher Bros., trenching machinery; Celina Stearic Acid Co., chemicals; Celina Lumber Co.; Celina Equity Exchange; Farm Bureau Co-Op; Wollam Aircraft and Marine Products Co.

Other Coldwater industries are: Matt Schieterman, Inc., stone quarry and contracting; Coldwater Grain Co. and Fox & Hess Milling Co.

Miscellaneous industry in Fort Recovery includes. Fort Recovery Equity Exchange; St. Clair Mills, Inc.; Equity Dairies, Inc.; Vonder Harr, meat processors and Fort Recovery Lumber Co.

The Perma Strand Co. in Rockford makes boat seats and tarpaulin covers for boats and motors; also cotton and rayon mops for domestic and industrial use. The owner is W. H. Jones. While one of a number of commercial printing plants in the county, the Rockford Press is one of the largest specialists in this area in the production of small catalogues. The other industries are the Farmers Grain Co.; the Little Elevator; the Rockford Lumber Co. and the Rockford Stone Co.

Other grain markets in northern Mercer County are the Roebuck Elevator at Neptune; Mercer Grain Co. at Mercer and Berne Equity at Chattanooga.

In St. Henry will be found the St. Henry Cement Products Co., blocks and tile; the Farm Bureau Co-Op Elevator and the Shockman Lumber Co.

Other southern Mercer County grain and feed markets are Burkettsville Grain Co.; Montezuma Grain Co.; Farm Bureau Co-Op at Chickasaw; St. Anthony Feed Mill and Maria Stein Elevator.

Utilities

Public Utility operators in Mercer County include the General Telephone Co. which has its district office in Celina and probably is the largest employer of labor and office workers.

Others are West Ohio Gas Company; Celina Power and Water Utilities; Dayton Light and Power Co.; Rockford Telephone Co. and the Wabash Mutual Telephone Co.

Celina Mutual Insurance Co.
National Mutual Insurance Co.

In 1914, a young insurance man with a vision launched the National Mutual Insurance Co. in a small two room office in Celina.

His name was E. J. Brookhart and his purpose was to establish a new line of insurance for the protection of automobile owners. Insurance people in general considered the venture a hair-brained scheme that was doomed to failure.

Four men believed in Mr. Brookhart's project and in September, 1914, the National Mutual Automobile Insurance Association was chartered. O. F. Rentzsch, pioneer Celina merchant and current president of the companies is the only living member of the founding group. The other three were J. D. Johnson, attorney, W. T. Palmer, grain broker and T. A. Weis, banker.

The Association started business with 20 policies in force, covering fire only. In 1915 approximately 8,000 policies were sold in Ohio. In 1916 Mr. Brookhart personally borrowed \$10,000 in order to charter the organization as a mutual company offering theft and other coverage.

With addition of general fire, tornado and lightning insurance and automobile liability, a new company was formed and chartered in 1919, The Celina Mutual Insurance Co. Such a structure enabled the issuance of a complete line of all kinds of insurance including a combined full coverage provided by the two companies.

The home office in Celina has 15,372 square feet of floor space and employs more than 100 persons. Branch offices are maintained in nine Ohio cities as well as Meadville, Pa. and Indianapolis, Ind. which employ an additional 42 persons.

From its humble start of 20 policies, 44 years ago, the combined assets of the two companies is now \$10,784,653.59.

Marion Mutual Insurance Association

The Marion Mutual Insurance Association was incorporated February 19, 1881 with the home office at St. Rosa, Ohio. Originally there were 18 members of the association and the purpose was the mutual protection of each against loss and damage by fire.

The home office address today is St. Henry, Ohio, route 1, John Post, secretary. The other officers are William Mescher, president, Frank Boeckman, vice president, Charles C. Bruns, treasurer. The directors are William Lennartz, C. A. Stubbs, Urban Rauh, Clarence Dirksen and John Hein.

The financial report of October 1, 1957 showed 1712 policies with \$22,069,396 insurance in force. Losses paid for that year totaled more than \$30,000. The largest single claim was \$12,605.25.

Mercer County's Famous Sons

Mercer County's sons contributed much to the cultural, professional, religious and recreational life of our nation.

These are men who have won acclaim in their endeavors. Joseph Pfister, portrait painter.

Tennyson Guyer, former pastor of Celina Church of God and Mayor of Celina and now one of the nations most widely known lecturers.

Bishop Hubert LeBlond, a native son who rose to a high position in the ranks of Roman Catholic clergy in Cleveland and Missouri.

Harry Sylvester, who several generations ago was one of the best known soloists one the American concert stage.

William C. Hussey a Union township native who became internationally known as an astronomer.

Vernon E. Vining, Celina who became one of the foremost sales executives in the United States.

Earl Wilson, a native of Rockford, and today one of the most widely known newspaper columnists in the United States.

In the sports field, Mercer County' most famous sons are Albert (Bruno) Betzel of Celina who won fame as the best second baseman in the Major Leagues while with the St. Louis Cardinals. The other baseball celebrity is St. Henry's own Wally Post, formerly with the Cincinnati Reds and now with Philadelphia, best known for his long ball hitting.

UNUSUAL PERSONALITIES

Johnny Appleseed

Thousands of apple orchards throughout Ohio in the early 1800's came from the orchards and seeds planted by John Chapman, generally known as Johnny Appleseed. He was born in Leominster, Massachusetts, September 26, 1774. His father was a Revolutionary War patriot.

Chapman first moved into western Pennsylvania and came to public attention in 1801 when he came down the Ohio River with two canoe loads of apple seeds which was 16 bushels and came from Pennsylvania cider presses.

Chapman planted nurseries along the Muskingum River Valley, and from 1810 to 1845 he gradually widened his field of operation, including one county after another, leasing ground and carrying seedlings from there to his next acre of apple tree planting.

His selling price for an apple seedling was a "a fip-penney bit" or about 6½ cents. If the settler did not have money, he would accept old clothes in payment. His favorite apple was the Rambo, one of the finest flavored for both cooking and eating.

Chapman went barefoot in all but the most severe weather and walked thousands of miles during his lifetime, visiting his widely scattered nurseries. He was deeply religious and was the first New-Church (Swedenborgian) missionary in Ohio.

Johnny Appleseed spent some time in Mercer County and on April 29, 1828 entered into one of his contracts with William B. Hedges of Dublin township. It provided for the leasing of a tract of land for planting and cultivating an apple orchard for a 10 year period. His payment to Hedges was 1,000 apple trees suitable for transplanting, or an average of 100 trees per year for 10 years.

Chapman was illiterate, humble, self-sacrificing and entertained no hope for reward. Seeking fertile spots for planting apple orchards was an obsession and almost a ritual in his simple life of hardships and privation. He was held almost in reverence by the Indians and welcomed by them everywhere.

About 1830 he reached Fort Wayne where he acquired considerable land. He built a log cabin and planted a nursery of 15,000 seedling apple trees. He probably realized that his life of strenuous work and exposure had taken a heavy toll of his strength and that he must give up his wide travels and establish a permanent home.

His death came at the home of David and William Worth, Fort Wayne, March 18, 1845. The clothing that covered his frail body at the time consisted of a coarse coffee sack with a whole cut in center of the bottom which was slipped over his head. He had on the waist of four pair of pants with the legs cut short and ripped up the sides. Over all these was the ragged remains of a pair of pantaloons

A 12 acre plot in which his grave is located was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. William McKay and is designated "Johnny Appleseed Memorial Park."

Further plans which were sponsored by the Men's Garden Club of America provided the planting of an apple orchard, one tree for each of the 48 states except Florida which does not produce apples.

There will be other appropriate landscaping and a Memorial Building will be erected on the slope toward the beautiful Allen County War Memorial Coliseum.

Mexican John

Mexican John was the name by which Jaun Francisco Monestero Paraldo Ceraldo was known to Mercer County citizens before and after the year 1900. The exact date of his birth in Mexico is not known but was probably near 1840. In the late 1870's or early 1880's he came to Celina, a fugitive from Mexican officials.

In his flight north, John abandoned all personal belongings excepting the colorful Mexican clothes which he wore. Because of his outdoor life, his swarthy face was leatherlike and lined but did not hide his twinkling black eyes and kind expression. He made a striking appearance in his colorful bolero, chaparajos, sombrero, high-heeled boot and jangling spurs.

Having lived in a saddle, John was disconsolate without a horse. He went to the Schuyler harness shop and prevailed upon Mrs. Schuyler's womanly sympathy to send for his saddle, bridle and lariat, which eventually arrived.

Mexican John was an expert horseman, marksman and lariat thrower and through the years demonstrated his skill at every opportunity, after which he would pass his hat for donations.

His favorite stunt was to ride at full speed down Main Street and leaning down, pick a silver quarter from the dust. The



General Hugh Mercer

retrieved coins became his own and he seldom missed. John's best roping trick was to have a man run with arms outstretched at his sides and then some one would call out the part of the man's body that was to be lassoed. His aim was infallible and the loop would settle as called, whether right or left arm, leg or body.

Mexican John, stooped, feeble and with shoulder length grey hair died at the county home about 1915, a harmless, likeable character and one of the last of a picturesque past but transplanted in a strange setting.

Professor James Rhoades

At the advent of the 20th century, one of the earliest forms of entertainment that came to the rural folks of Mercer County, was the visit of Professor James Rhoades and his magic lantern show at the district school houses.

Jim was a small, stooped, smiling man and usually having begrimed hands and face. His bony fingers were bedecked with cheap, gaudy rings and around his neck was a jangling string of atrocious, colorful beads, badges, rabbit's feet, rooster spurs et certa.

His personal appearance made no difference, for rural entertainment, save that of their own making, was very scarce. The Professor's repertoire was colored slides of far away places, buildings and scenes which he projected upon a white sheet with his magic lantern which was powered by a coal oil lamp. The advent of moving pictures put the Professor out of business.

Crazy John

Another early personality was "Crazy John" whose real name is unknown and the writer doubts if it was ever known to anyone in Celina.

He was a civil war veteran and was said to have also served in the Mexican War in 1848. An exploding shell tore a hole in John's skull, and what probably was a miracle of surgery in those days, the bone was replaced with a silver plate. He was harmlessly insane and an inmate of the Dayton Soldiers and Sailors Home.

John did not have any known relatives. For years upon receipt of his monthly pension, he would board a C. H. & D. train and ride to Celina, free of cost. He would remain until his money was gone; he had spent all that friends had given him and could no longer get credit at the saloons and restaurants. He was then put on the train and returned to the Dayton Home.

Even his distorted mind recognized the kindness and sympathy of our people. When quiet and sober he had a far-away look of sadness in his watery, blue eyes. Even so there was a jauntiness in the way he wore his blue uniform and the familiar sloping cap of the Civil War era set at an angle, that commanded respect as well as sympathy.

Immortal J. N.

At various times a man with a bearing of seeming importance which belied his old and mussed clothing, registered at the desk of the Ellis Hotel, Celina. The hotel hosts Wilshire and James Ellis treated him with respect and called a boy who ushered him to his room.

Several days later, with the same dignity, the man approached the desk, to check out and asked for his bill. When told that he was an honored guest and that the charge was only half-rate, the somber faced man would reply: "Your generosity is appreciated, but it shall not exceed mine. I will cancel the other half. Good day sir." Then bowing the guest departed.

The man was known as "Immortal J. N." and a similar scene was re-enacted in hotels all over the country. The railroads carried him free of cost.

J. N. Freese was a brilliant trial attorney. He felt certain of the innocence of one of his clients who was charged with first degree murder, but a web of damaging circumstantial evidence which could not be broken down made it impossible for Mr. Freese to win an acquittal and his client was executed.

This fact preyed so heavily on Mr. Freese's mind that it brought mental derangement to this brilliant attorney. Later his mind became more complexly mixed; his visits ceased and the final chapter of his life is locally unknown.

William H. Berry

At the start of the 20th century, William H. Berry, a farmer and flour mill owner with a keen mechanical mind spent years and a great amount of money in attempts to perfect a flying machine and solve the will-o-the-wisp theory of Pertetual Motion which had defied the efforts of many who tried in that era.

Mr. Berry's mechanical bird like all heavier than air models was a wierd looking contraption and was also a radical departure from other inventors' designs and theories who attempted to make air-borne craft.

Bouyancy was to be provided by a hollow cylinder formed with fabric around a framework. The ship was powered by a small automobile motor with propellors attached.

Above the motor and on top of the craft were the seat and controls for the man who was willing to risk a take-off.

A stranger from a distant city and reputed to be an expert in aeronautics was summoned. He walked around the machine casually; glanced at the motor and then climbed into the seat. After inspecting the controls and just as casually, he climbed down and approached Mr. Berry and said: "That thing will not Fly." Henry's dream bubble was bursted.

Mr. Berry's other endeavor which became an obsession was building a perpetual motion machine which had thwarted the efforts of scientists and inventors for centuries.

His completed model was a huge cumbersome device about six or eight feet high and about ten feet long. It was exhibited in a room now occupied by Sears Roebuck & Co. in the Lininger building, Celina, and a nominal admission charge was made.

At first all went well and then one day all motion stopped and the machine was silent. It seems that the mechanism was powered by a stream of water which caused several metal balls to roll on tracks and up and down inclines. The water supply failed; the machine stopped and another of Mr. Berry's fond hopes died.

DISASTERS

Tornadoes

May 14, 1886 had been a hot and humid day and late in the afternoon, the western sky had taken on a foreboding look that brought fear to the minds of many Washington township citizens.

One such person was William H. Bryan, road contractor. His crew was grading and building a gravel road near St. Anthony.

Mr. Bryan stopped his work; squinted reflectively at the darkened sky and the low hanging clouds with dark streamers hanging earthward. He then spoke quickly and quietly. "We are quitting for the day. A bad storm will break soon. Everyone hurry to his home, make things secure and get ready for it."

When Mr. Bryan arrived at his home he expressed his fears to his family which included his wife, a brother, an aged aunt and also a hired hand, Christian Van de Hoevel, a Hollander commonly called "Dutch John."

Livestock and equipment were secured and supper served. Then followed the nervous tension of helplessly awaiting what ever might be their fate. The wind grew in intensity and shook the house. The rain came as a deluge and the constant blinding flashes of lightning made the room as bright as day, even though the shades were drawn.

At 9:00 p.m. a roar like that of a speeding train brought silence to the group. Mr. Bryan rushed to the window and saw a whirling black funnel bearing down upon them and at its base was a luminous glow. Trees were crashed and flying debris filled the air.

He quickly herded his family outside and down the cellar steps. All reached safety excepting Dutch John. His hand still grasped the door knob when the full fury of the tornado struck the house. The door was hurled out with John still clutching the knob. How far he traveled with the door is unknown. However when he came down in a field under his body was a buggy lap robe while beside him was a woman's coat and dress and strangely enough each of these pieces of apparel had been in different rooms of the house when the tornado struck. Dutch John was uninjured.

Many freakish things happened at the Bryan farm, such as everyone has heard of following the passing of a tornado. One of Mr. Bryan's coats was missing and six months later a Van Wert

county farmer living near Elgin, 30 miles away found Mr. Bryan's coat in the top of a tree. It was undamaged and in the pockets were a pipe, silk handkerchief and daily log book bearing his name and address.

At the Scud Wilson home which was demolished, their tiny baby was carried from the home and gently placed between two logs in a field, uninjured and without a scratch.

Elsewhere, the tornado wrecked scores of buildings including St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School, south of Wabash. Human casualties were heavy including many injuries and several deaths. The exact number of the latter cannot now be authenticated but among them were Mrs. Shively, Mrs. Fought and an aged man, Mr. Evans.

Mr. Bryan, a highly respected citizen, successful road contractor and farmer, confirmed several oft repeated statements of the freakish actions of tornadoes. He said chickens were stripped of their feathers and that straws were embedded in trees. He attributed the straw incident to the fact that the terrific twisting force of the wind momentarily opened a split in the tree and at that moment a flying straw entered the crevice.

He also told of a chest of drawers from a bedroom which was left standing upright on the kitchen floor. The drawers had been sucked open and all of the bed linens blown away and the drawers again blown shut.

Some tornadoes dissipate themselves quickly, while others will strike, then rise, descend again and strike and sometimes repeat this course several times.

There were two phases to the 1886 tornado which brought death and destruction to Mercer County.

John H. Now of Hopewell township and one of Mercer County's most widely known citizens was 10 years old when this twister again came to earth near the Garman home on the Mud Pike. Pleasant View Church (on Route 118) was completely destroyed. Only the floor remained, along with the Lectern which was not moved. On it was the Bible, still closed and undisturbed.

The Jacob Botkins home was also destroyed while the home of L. Garman was carried away from its foundation.

In 1920 another tornado struck in northern Darke County and moved in the customary northeasterly direction. At the Mercer County line, the twister split, one part moving north leaving heavy damage to buildings, livestock and utility lines in the western part of the county, and in the vicinity of Rockford.

Its strongest force was exerted when the awesome funnel dropped in Blackcreek and Dublin townships leaving a trail of destruction and about 15 injured persons.

The greatest fury was exerted by the right fork of the tornado which followed a northeasterly course through Cranberry, St.

Rosa and Chickasaw. It then passed between New Bremen and St. Marys and again dropped, almost wiping the little village of Moulton off the map. It then rose and dissipated.

The Lawrence Lohctefeld home one-half mile east of Chickasaw was lifted and carried across the road and then dropped in a field. Mr. and Mrs. Lohctefeld, each sustained fractured bones and other injuries. Their 10 months old baby, wrapped in its bedding was carried 200 yards and was found uninjured in a field.

The Red Cross was mobilized and 100 Celina citizens equipped with axes, shovels and crowbars joined men from Rockford and the south part of Mercer County in clearing wreckage and rendering aid.

The damage in Mercer County was estimated between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000.

Celina Fire 1894

In the early hours of July 26, 1894, Mercer County's most devastating fire completely destroyed one entire block in Celina.

Among the business completely destroyed were the post office, three saloons, McKee jewelry store, Citizens Bank, Commercial Bank, Heisser's bakery, Wyckoff's drug store and the Weekly Standard. All mail, records and equipment in the post office was saved.

On Market street everything was burned except a small frame shed on the alley. Included were the Fortman grocery and the Metzner & Pifer implement store. On Fayette street the loss included the Casper Schmitt grocery and drug store and office of Dr. Taylor. Other business places were unquestionably lost, however there are no surviving citizens who can furnish this information. For most of the information which is given here credit is due to John Wenning, 83, veteran Celina barber who was an eye witness.

Calls were made to nearby towns for help and Lima and Van Wert responded with horse-drawn steam fire engines. It was a worthy but futile gesture in so far as saving the block was concerned because of the distance the ponderous vehicles had to be brought. All of the buildings were of frame construction but three.

Celina's sole equipment in charge of Chief Leifeld and his volunteer crew was a small hand operated pumper and a bucket brigade. This pumper was later sold to Chickasaw for \$50 and today the bright red little vehicle rests in the Lima Museum.

The Lima and Van Wert steam pumbers did however save the remainder of the uptown section. When the fire cisterns were pumped dry, they laid their hose to the reservoir and pumped streams of water on buildings across the streets.

There were no deaths and the only known injury was a broken leg sustained by a Mr. Gibbons who jumped from a second story window. It is thought the fire started at the rear of what is



Rockford Main Street

now the McKirnan building on west Fayette street by a drunk who was sleeping off a binge in the haymow or that a clandestine party was in progress there.

Disease Epidemics

In 1894, Dr. Emil Adolph Von Behringer a noted German physician discovered the Diphtheria Antitoxin which he made from the blood of healthy artificially immunized horses, for which he later received the Noble Prize.

It was only a few months later that the killer disease struck Mercer County and its terrible impact centered in Liberty township. Up to this time an immunizer was unknown, treatment was relatively ineffectual and the death rate was appalling.

The Antitoxin had been used successfully in only a few cases and was entirely unproven as compared to today's medical standards of acceptance. Nevertheless a young practitioner, Dr. I. J. Ransbottom of Wabash, alarmed at the killing epidemic that swept Liberty township, staked his own life and professional career in the use of the Diphtheria Antitoxin.

He ordered a large supply of the serum and began a voluntary around-the-clock fight against the disease. Scoring sleep and rest, this courageous young 25 year old country doctor administrated scores of injections. It seemed that God was fighting beside the young medic for his humanitarian efforts were 100 per cent effective and the epidemic was stopped.

Another deadly disease for which there was no hope of recovery was Asiatic Cholera. Three sectors of Mercer were swept by this terror. Marion township, where the first group of pioneer settlers were wiped out by the Cholera outbreak of about 1830-32.

The number of deaths is unknown, however an unauthenticated story is that because of the deadly contagion of Asiatic Cholera, a mass burial was made in one huge grave.

If this is true, the location of the grave has been lost in the past. Several of Marion township's elder citizens have confirmed a long standing opinion that some of the cholera victims were buried in St. John's Catholic Cemetery at Maria Stein. If this is true, it would have been before the establishing of this plot as a cemetery. There are no grave markers of 1832 date, however there are some of 1854 which was the year of the second Asiatic Cholera epidemic which occurred in the Wilshire area in the northern part of Blackcreek township and also in Granville township near Burkettsville.

The number of deaths during the Wilshire outbreak is unknown, however a statement is credited to Dr. J. W. Pearce, a Wilshire physician at that time, that out of 75 Wilshire residents, 40 of them died, his wife being one of them.

Many bodies were buried in the old part of the Wilshire Cemetery, bordering the ravine on the east. Some of the original markers were inscribed "Died of Cholera", and two men were kept busy digging graves during the worst of the epidemic.

The tornado of 1920 devastated the old section of the cemetery, shattering markers and carrying many away. There was no plat and it was impossible to identify some of the graves. A large number of the head stones dated 1854 would indicate that the majority of these were cholera victims.

Other victims more remote from the village were quickly buried in their own back yards without shrouds, coffins or boxes.

Another interesting statement credited to Dr. Pearce is that the remedies used were assofoetida and red pepper, while some of the folks tried to reinforce the potency of the treatment by an addition of whiskey.

Quarantine of the stricken area was by posting of armed guards at all roads and trails leading into Wilshire to prevent passage of unauthorized persons.

The third township visited by the Asiatic Cholera scourge was Granville and here also the number of deaths that resulted is unknown. The only remaining evidence is a weed tangled patch, which when the writer visited it was in the middle of a clover field on the Hemmelgarn farm on the Hemmelgarn road 1½ miles northwest of Burkettsville.

This was the burial ground of cholera victims of one family relationship. The writer scraped and dug away debris and sod and found 10 markers that were lying flat. Others undoubtedly were there and were either buried deeper or were inaccessible in the tangle of brush.

The date on one eroded stone was legible and was 1854. The name on three which could be read was Gilbert. This was the name of a pioneer family from whom Burkettsville got its first name Gilbert's Station. The descendants no longer live in that vicinity.

After the epidemic, the survivors of the family moved to Darke county and years later they attempted to have the bodies exhumed and removed to their neighborhood. The necessary legal processes revealed that these people had died of cholera and because of the extreme contagious danger of the disease, even after years of burial, permission was denied.

Fort Recovery Explosion

October 17, 1906, at the conclusion of the parade of the annual Horse Show, Fort Recovery was rocked by a terrific explosion that brought consternation and fear to the many hundreds of visitors.

It was a sudden transition from an air of merrymaking to one of shocking horror and gloom of death. The explosion occurred at the rear of the Joseph Meinerding hardware store and is supposed to have been caused by the ignition of a concentration of gas.

Five persons were killed, 12 to 15 seriously injured and scores suffered minor injuries.

The hardware store, Journal newspaper office, Roop blacksmith shop and a dwelling were demolished and six or eight others

were considerably damaged by the explosion. Many other buildings suffered minor damage such as glass breakage, etc.

Heavy damage was sustained by the Catholic Church, two blocks away where every window was broken.

Mendon Fires

Mendon as visited by two disastrous fires. One in February, 1906 wiped out a large part of the west side of Main street and another in January, 1907 destroyed almost all of the east side of Main street.

Vanishing Communities

Once there were many thriving little trading centers scattered over Mercer County that each in its own right was the life blood of its community. Yielding to progress, good highways and automobiles, some of them are only ghosts of their former importance and now holding memories of a happy past.

Erastus, Durbin, Tamah, Oregon, Wabash, Macedon and others are among them. Today, a store, church and grain elevator may be the only reminder of the faded past. Many of them had a one room district school nearby and a tiny post office in the corner of the general store.

Wabash had the convenience of the Loudenbeck hotel and boarding house, township hall and a community Doctor which lent it added importance.

Chickasaw, which today is larger than other small villages was once very important. Under the stimulus of the C. H. & D. railroad it boasted of two thriving hotels.

One community, yielding to the changing times vanished completely, leaving no trace of its existence. It was Montpelier and its name is found on a yellowed county map of 1852, and was located at the southwest corner of the reservoir.

History seems to have forgotten this village which vanished years ago and the residents are a forgotten people. It appears that this was a settlement of French pioneers and it is assumed that the founders were employed in the construction of the reservoir. Their only tie to their earliest past may well have been in naming their village after their home city in France, Montpelier.

It is also possible that the light-hearted, fun-loving French construction workers did not mingle with and possibly were not accepted by the more serious minded, home-building hardy pioneer settlers of Franklin township.

Whatever the secrets of Montpelier may be, they are now locked in the fertile soil of fields of grain at the intersection of U. S. Highway 127 and Route 703, the Montezuma road.

STORIES THAT MADE HEADLINES

Secaur Murder and Lynching

The Sunday morning tranquility of the countryside was broken by a crackling in the bushes, gruff voices and a smothered

scream as cruel hands siezed and throttled pretty little Mary Arabella Secaur. She was dragged into the thicket and then there was silence.

The Sabbath morning of June 23, 1872 found the usual after breakfast hustle and bustle at the Secaur home in Liberty township. The children departed on their long walk to Sunday School at Liberty church and Mrs. Secaur sank into a chair and breathed a contented sigh.

Services closed and Mary, alone started for home. At a secluded spot one mile from her destination she was siezed, dragged into the woods, her little body violated and then beaten to death.

Her absence brought a widespread search, but it was not until Monday at 4 p.m. that her cruelly ravaged body was found. It had also been mangled and partially eaten by hogs.

Two tinware peddlers, one a Canadian youth and the other a local boy had been in the vicinity and had attended church services but apparently not to worship. Their sudden disappearance pointed the finger of suspicion toward them and they were overtaken and arrested while enroute to Fort Wayne, by Sheriff Thornton Spriggs and deputies D. T. Spriggs, William Johnson and William Moore.

July 5th the young men confessed to the crime and the rumbling of mob violence assumed formidable proportions. At 4 a.m., July 8th grim faced men began assembling in Celina and by 10 a.m. news of this was widespread and Celina became crowded with people.

Sheriff Spriggs and his deputies barricaded themselves in the jail and awaited developments. At 12 noon, the most dramatic and grim sight in the history of the county or any other place unfolded. Two hundred horsemen in a quiet and orderly manner that denoted calm leadership and determination, rode into town and halted in front of the jail.

The possession of the prisoners was demanded and Sheriff Spriggs pleaded with the men to disperse. The crowd would not be denied their vengeance and moments later battered down the door; over-powered the officers and dragged the screaming prisoners into the street.

The two young men were loaded into a wagon, and as quietly as they came, the mob now swelled to several thousand, went directly to Liberty township and a spot near the scene of the crime.

Two trees were cut down and a gallows erected. The ropes were placed around the necks of the trussed men and the wagon driven from under them. No attempts at prosecution were ever made in connection with this frontier type of vengeance. In view of the many people involved and the attitude of the public, such an effort would have been useless.

Reservoir Bulkhead Dynamited

May 22, 1918, Riley Colton, erstwhile fisherman, hunter and otherwise a man of unsavory character and habits, shot himself through the eye with a 22 caliber rifle in his room at the County Home.

His passing would not have caused a ripple of comment if it had not revived memories of his dastardly deed a number of years earlier; that of dynamiting the Bulkhead on the east bank of Grand Lake.

Suspicion pointed to Riley Colton and he was arrested, indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced to a term in the Ohio Penitentiary.

Fortunately for St. Marys and the surrounding area, the dynamiting was bungled or the swoolen waters of the Reservoir would have caused a holocaust in loss of lives and property.

There had been much agitation at the time and also threats made because of flooded farmland during spring high water periods. Several persons were suspected of being behind the plot but there was no proof of their guilt.

Through the intervening years, Colton's lips were sealed and the identity of the higher-ups died with him.

Rockford Bank Robbery

November 22, 1919, bank robbers stole what was first announced as \$75,000 in Liberty Bonds from the Rockford Farmers' Savings Bank. A later check placed the loss at \$200,00 along with War Savings Stamps and \$2,000 in postage stamps belonging to the Rockford Post Office. Only Liberty Bonds that were negotiable were taken.

Entrance was gained at night and 19 safety deposit boxes were battered open. Currency in the bank was not taken and neither was \$50,000 in bonds belonging to Gus Kolter and \$25,000 worth owned by Charles Behymer. It was thought the robbers were frightened away before the job was completed.

Other Major Crimes

Through the years there were, of course, murders, suicides and violent deaths that caused varying degrees of sensationalism. No violent deaths however brought forth more talk and indignation than four killings for which there were either no solution or conviction.

April 11, 1900, Millie Quigg, Clyde McGraw, Georgia Edwards, Charles Martin, Alice Sowers and Nellie Black were arrested in connection with the murder of John R. Dilley at the Lakeside saloon and "Bawdy" house at the foot of Main street, Celina. The building sat on what is now the park area between the Nickle Plate and the shelter house at the water's edge. There were no convictions and general hints of official protection were widespread.



Celina Main Street

Another unsolved murder was that of an itinerant whose name was Brown. He was shot through the eye at a rooming house adjoining the C. H. & D. railroad in the west side of Celina. His body laid in Celina mortuary window on Main street for several days in hopes of identification which was never made.

An unsolved murder which caused much censoring was the slaying of a harmless and penniless old man, David Berry in 1912. His body was found in the Western Ohio Interurban waiting room at the Nickerson Club House east of Celina. His head was battered and mangled. A reward of \$500 by the county commissioners brought no clues or at least any that were used successfully.

In 1881, four men, Houser, O'Niel, Petrie and Allen were arraigned on a murder charge. The scene of the crime was a saloon on north Main street, Celina, across from the city hall. The story as handed down was: A huge, muscular famer was drinking alone at the bar. Four men taking offense at his aloofness started trouble with him.

In the fight the burly farmer was winning against his four opponents until he was struck over the head from behind, with a heavy oak chair. The victim was a stranger; the regular hangers-on would not talk and again official protection was claimed by many.

In 1892, Tighe, Miller and Gibbons were charged with murder, but there was no conviction. There were 2 arrests for murder in 1876; one in 1877; four in 1881; one each in 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886; three in 1887; 1 in 1893 and 3 in 1894.

Thus an analysis of the above crimes discloses that it was the period from 1876 to 1894 which was the county's era of lawlessness and violence. It was then that the turbulence subsided and major crimes became few.

With the dawn of the 20th century until 1958 less than a dozen homicide cases confronted the law enforcement officials and courts of Mercer County.

According to the Ohio Judicial Criminal Statistics for the eight year period from 1949 to 1956, the convictions for major offenses in Mercer County were: Criminal homicide 4; Rape 1; Robbery 3; Aggravated Assault 5; Burglary 23; Sex Offenses 5; Minor convictions 54. Complete data is not available prior to 1949.

The most common of the other major crimes at the turn of the century was horse stealing, and probably outnumbered all other major crimes combined.

There were well organized gangs of horse thieves all over the country and all counties had their own organization of Vigalantes which in cooperation with the Sheriff would sweep into action after each stable or pasture raid.

Probably the most notorious leader of horse thief gangs was Marvin Kuhn who operated extensively in Van Wert county and made many forays into northern Mercer County and other adjacent

counties. He met his death in a gun battle with Van Wert County Sheriff Fred Hutt. He was probably the most widely known, efficient and fearless peace officer in the tri-state area during those turbulent days. When he killed Kuhn, he broke the backbone of the horse stealing period in this vicinity.

Hutt finished late years of his life as the most feared detective of the Cincinnati Northern Railroad Company and was widely known in Mercer County.

FACTS AND LEGENDS

William Simison

In Granville township west of the settlement known as Cranberry Prairie is several sections of muck land that during the Civil War period was known as The Black Acres or Cranberry Bog. It was unsuited to farming and was a tangled, wild and treacherous morass infested by cooperhead and rattle snakes.

Almost a Section of this area was the purest of black powdery muck in which humans or animals could be hopelessly mired. These forbidding Black Acres was the refuge and hide-away of William Simison, the legendary and feared man of that region.

Stories picture him as fearless, dangerous, unpredictable and slovenly. There does not seem to be any proof however of his harming any of the people of that area, or their property, excepting that which has been handed down, indicates there was violence.

He was a hunted man because of his refusal to serve in the Union Army and he was constantly sought by detachments of soldiers and also bounty hunters. Because of his skill and cunning and the aid of a few unknown friends, he seemed to live a charmed life and was never brought to justice.

Many times his pursuers closely followed him to the edge of the Black Acres where he disappeared safely into its innermost fastness. The soldiers or bounty hunters dared not enter for it would have been almost certain death. The safe trails to the hideout were known only to Simison.

Stories handed down, credit his escape from death by snake bite to his fierce large dog which was his constant companion and which had learned to successfully fight and kill copperheads and rattlers, and also a secret concoction which was his antidote for snake venom. It was a secret which was said to have died with him.

A story was told of the only time he was ever captured and how his cunning effected his escape. Two soldier guards were taking Simison to army authorities at Lima and enroute they stopped overnight at a tavern in Spencerville. (Another version is St. Marys).

Through agreeableness, co-operation and woodmanship Bill had won a certain amount of confidence of his guards. He had shown an interest in their guns which were better than his own and differed

in some ways. While in their room he asked to inspect their rifles. Since he was handcuffed and was outnumbered, they complied but were alert to any treachery.

It was a habit of Bill's to be scratching his scraggly beard and hair, picking at his nose and digging wax from his ears. While examining the guns he slyly slipped some of the oily ear wax inside the percussion caps. He then dashed from the room and through the tavern door. The guards followed, raised their guns and pulled the triggers but the guns did not fire.

Simison disappeared in the darkness and soon was back in his Black Acres hideout. He lived to die a natural death after the end of the war. In death he was as mysterious as in life and also, in death his only friend was a huge, gaunt feeble dog which remained crouched beside the shallow grave where his wooden coffin had been placed by those who had found his dead body.

THE MACEDON STORY

Near the historic Wabash River on State Route 219, six miles west of Coldwater is Macedon, a pretty, quiet little village of about 20 homes.

Macedon is a typical peaceful rural community with the nostalgia of pastoral serenity and historic background. About half of its homes are new, modern and well kept. Only two houses, one a dilapidated frame structure and the other a crumbling ruins of huge square hand hewn logs, speak of the dim past.

One hundred years or more ago, Macedon was a thriving, rough and tough village of 400 or 500 inhabitants. It was typical of the frontier towns where a fight or trouble could be found on a moments notice, if sought. A large part of the first inhabitants according to stories, were hard working and equally hard drinking and hard fighting Irish.

There were four general stores; several saloons and gambling places; two hotels-one the famous Guenther House; a lime kiln, wagon shop, brick yard; barber shop and blacksmith shop.

The contention that the population of Macedon was once 400 or more is borne out by the fact that when Macedon was platted in 1838 by George Arbaugh and William Nichols, it included 60 lots and later 42 lots were added.

The eastern limits of the village extended considerably beyond its present east line and that many acres now under cultivation were at one time covered with houses and cabins. The western limits did not extend much beyond the present line. Between it and the Wabash lowlands is a high knoll that is now a well kept cemetery and which 150 years and more ago was an Indian burial ground.

Many Indian bones have been exhumed and hundreds of trinkets and arrow heads have been found when graves were excavated. Thus the same plot of ground has served as a resting place for red



Mendon Main Street

skinned bodies whose spirits were in the happy hunting grounds, as well as for the descendants of the whites who drove the redman from his native haunts.

The Guenther House Mystery

On the west edge of the village of Macedon on the banks of a creek is a neat, comfortably remodeled home which has no semblance of the past, but which 100 years ago was the Guenther House, a hotel or tavern of bad repute.

This building was the setting of a mystery shrouded murder just prior to the Civil War. Later the place was abandoned and as is often the case became entwined with ghostly stories. It was shunned by many people and dozens of tenants hurriedly left it. Some folks reported lights moving about upstairs while others said they heard a thudding noise like a body falling.

The tavern was operated by John Guenther and his sons and was the scene of numerous brawls and trouble. Among those present at a New Year's eve dance was a Drover or stock buyer, who was passing through. He drank heavily and boasted of having \$500 from the sale of a herd of cattle.

A young man whose name according to stories was John Griffith but may have been Young as claimed by an elderly Macedon citizen, became suspicious of Guenther because of his actions and questions, while plying the Drover with liquor.

After the dance and party broke up, Young loitered in the darkness and watched a lighted upstairs window. He heard a thud and then the light was extinguished.

Later he saw three men come from the tavern carrying a heavy object and soon they reappeared from the darkness. The next day it was learned that the Drover had disappeared and also that the tavern well had been filled. The towns people were puzzled but fearful to voice their opinions.

Young entered the Union Army soon after this happening and when he returned he told his story to some close friends and they started excavating the old well. It is said that when they reached a depth of 16 feet Young suffered a heart attack. His friends were unnerved and abandoned the job. Another story has it that the friends became frightened and quit the job and Young being unable to continue alone was forced to give up. Whether or not the body is still at the bottom of the well is unknown.

The Guenthers becoming alarmed by talk of the villagers suddenly disappeared. They are supposed to have fled to Canada as they were notorious Southern sympathizers and their tavern had been a refuge of draft dodgers, bounty hunters and other lawless elements. At one time it was raided by Union soldiers who were home on furlough.

Macedon Medical School

For a number of years there was a Medical School in Macedon and probably the first in Ohio and one of the first in the middle west. The old log structure referred to earlier in this story was a part of that school and behind it was a large semi-upground cellar room which was also used.

The details are not complete, but one or more Doctors were in charge under whom students studied or "Read Medicine" as it was called in those days. The late Dr. S. R. Wilson whose last home was in Celina at the turn of the 20th Century attended this school.

The skeleton used in this school which was discontinued in the 1870's was later in the office of a Washington Township physician, Dr. Denney. After discontinuing his practice, the skeleton was thrown into Buck ditch by a tenant in the house and flood waters washed it away. One bone of it remains, a femur which has been restored and varnished and is in possession of Chris Ranly, Fort Recovery Upholsterer.

This leg bone has another significance, being from the body of one of the confessed slayers who was lynched after murdering little Mary Arbella Secaur in Liberty Township in 1872.

THE CHATTANOOGA STORY

From about 1895 to 1910, Chattanooga was the center of a widespread oil strike that brought wealth to some Liberty Township citizens. As in all early oil booms, along with the influx of legitimate operators and dependable workmen, the village and countryside was burdened by a hard drinking, fighting and gambling element that brought fear and concern to the people.

Mrs. Roy Pifer, daughter of Theobold Lininger, deceased, one of the township's most respected citizens said. "Those were wild days and women were afraid to be away from home alone, after dark. My father exercised his own special kind of Christianity. Often a noisy, lost drunk would stagger into our yard. Father would quiet him and fix him a place on the porch to sleep off his drunkenness."

There were about 60 people in Chattanooga when the oil boom started and there were no accommodations for the many who came. They slept in barns and the livery stable.

Jacob Baker moved to Chattanooga in 1865 and later operated a saw mill. One day he stopped the big saw to make a repair and while doing so someone unknowingly threw the belt. The saw started and cut Mr. Baker's body in half. That was in 1889 and only a short time earlier John Allmandinger opened an undertaking business in Chattanooga and Mr. Baker's body was the first to be taken to the church and cemetery in the new black horse-drawn hearse. Before that time they could not embalm them, hence the bodies were merely "laid out" and the funeral party was headed by spring wagon carrying the wooden coffin.

Before the oil boom, Wildcat School was a one room building. Oil workers children increased the enrollment to 90 pupils for one teacher, many of them because of the moving life of the families were 18 and 19 years old and had not reached the eighth grade.

A two room school was built and another teacher employed. The oil pools were pumped dry; wells were plugged and the workers moved to other fields and Chattanooga no longer needed the second teacher and extra schoolroom.

During the oil boom Mrs. Emerick a widow was murdered. Oil was struck on her farm and as was the prevailing custom, she kept her money hidden in her house.

Her body was found in the well and the house had been ransacked. A male relative left town soon after her death. Suspicion pointed to him but he was never apprehended and no action was taken because of the lack of tangible clues.

THE CHICKASAW STORY

Near Chickasaw is a small cemetery known as the Iniard burial ground and sometimes through misunderstanding has been thought to be Indian burial ground.

The Iniards were a small colony of families, all of whom were relatives. Very little was known of them as they were a close knit group and kept to themselves. Apparently they were of some origin other than German, for they spoke English and knew only enough German to make their wants known in trading and ordinary needs.

They did not have any known religion and were very superstitious and inclined to witchcraft and fetish beliefs. They were a communal group or as it is known they were communistic in their mode of living, that of owning, working and sharing of everything as a group.

If an animal or human acted other than normal they were believed to be "hexed" or under an evil spell. While others were not permitted to be present at their rites, it was known that they had ways and rituals by which they attempted to drive out evil spirits.

On one occasion there was a colt that was supposed to be "hexed". Whatever its trouble or illness might have been, they could not drive out the evil spirit. In order to kill the hex for all time and probably to "save face" as well, a brush fire was built and the colt was bound and burned alive.

They were a poor and impoverished group and lived on a tract of land south of Chickasaw which was unsuitable for farming or plating into town lots as water could not be procured through wells. Here the Iniards built their shacks and carried their water from Chickasaw Creek where it flowed clear and clean over a gravel bed.

It is not known what happened to all this colony but many of them lie in the Iniard burial ground.



Coldwater Main Street

In the vicinity of Chickasaw was a small band of Indians before the white settlers came. They were known as the Chickasaw tribe and lived on the higher ground along the stream which took their name, Chickasaw Creek.

They were a peaceful, hunting, fishing and trapping band, merely eking out an existence. Until recent years hundreds of their arrow heads and artifacts were found on the higher grounds.

The presence of members of the Chickasaw tribe being in this vicinity is not clearly understood. The original habitat of the Chickasaw tribe was in Oklahoma, and at one time was a warlike tribe of 19,000. Later they crossed into Mississippi. Here some of them scattered. Some moved into Tennessee and a few went as far north as the Ohio River.

It is assumed that a small group moved into Ohio and that eventually some of them reached Mercer County. Evidently they were the remnants that survived the harrassment and near annihilation so common at the hands of hostile tribes in Ohio.

Chickasaw which now has about 150 inhabitants, once boasted of about 500 and was an important trade center in the cross country traffic. A plank road was the forerunner of what is now State Route 274 and a toll station was located here. Farmers from the western part of the county used this route to the New Bremen flour mills.

Many hundreds of wagon loads of grain passed through the town enroute to New Bremen where they were unloaded into the canal boats. Hogs were slaughtered over a wide area of southern Mercer County and the whole carcasses were brought to Chickasaw to the flour mill and unloaded in the cellar. Here the carcasses were cut up into ham, shoulders and side meat. The hams and shoulders were heavily salted and shipped by canal boat to Cincinnati; the side meat, also salted was shipped to West Virginia for the coal miners. The so-called offal, head, backbones and spareribs were taken back by the farmers and used for their own winter meat. A two bushel grain sack full of this offal would sell for only a few cents on the market.

The plank road being a main east and west route not only brought many hundreds of creaking, loaded ox-drawn wagons, but many tired travelers, home-seekers and disreputable characters to the doors of the Chickasaw taverns and hotels.

One tavern and hotel at the east side of the village was a favorite rendevoous of the rougher element of visitors and was one of the few places visited by William Simison, the bad man of Granville Township's Black Acres. This fact also brought soldiers and bounty hunters to the place.

At the east edge of Chickasaw was also located an underground railroad stop-over for negro slaves before the Civil War. This

was their last stop and when released the next day they were on their own resources in choosing their destination. Many of them stayed and found employment hiring out to the farmers of that area.

The building of the T. D. & B. Railroad, later the C. H. & D. in 1881 brought Chickasaw its greatest prosperity, at least equal to the opening of the Miami and Erie canal. Time moved on but Chickasaw suffered many setbacks and disasters, the worst of which was an epidemic of fires with heavy losses. These destroyed the Handle Factory, Flour Mill, Depot and a score of business places and residences.

The Erastus Story

While Carrie Nation received fame as the "hatchet-welding" dry crusader of Kansas, she was not the first saloon wrecker. Actually that credit belongs in Mercer County and more specifically to the women of Murphysboro, Washington Township, now Erastus.

Seventy-five years ago, there was a Methodist Church, saw mill, two tile mills, two general stores and a blacksmith shop in Murphysboro. A newcomer to the village thought he recognized an opportunity to make money here, so he opened a saloon.

Murphysboro was a quiet, church-going community and the nearby farm wives resented the opening of the saloon. They objected to their men using it for either drinking, card playing or loafing.

Their protests failed as did their patience and as a last resort took aggressive action. Armed with axes, they invaded the saloon and smashed the tables and fixtures into wreckage. The next morning the place was closed and the owner had left the village.

If you should drive through Erastus today, you would probably wonder why it was named Erastus, also why should it have any name. All that is there is the Adams grocery and the Methodist Church.

The village Murphysboro was named after the man who owned the saw mill, Mr. Murphy. The settlement grew and a star mail route was extended and a post office set up in the general store owned by Erastus Walker.

The Post Office department would not use the name Murphysboro because there was another town in Ohio having that name. The department picked Mr. Walker's first name and thereafter the village was known as Erastus.

Miscellaneous Subjects

In 1919 the Central Waterways Association proposed to enlarge Grand Reservoir to a length of 30 miles. The purpose was to feed a deep new barge canal, 100 feet wide and 12 feet deep and to follow the route of the old Miami & Erie Canal from Cincinnati to the Maumee River.

Mercer County made a vigorous fight to prevent this proposal from gaining momentum. It was pointed out that if 20 miles were added to the lake on the west side, it would extend eight miles into Indiana to Bryant. Should it be enlarged equally on the west and east sides, it would extend to within two miles of the Indiana line.

In either case Mercer County would be cut in half and 20,000 acres of its fertile land be lost. The project died before the onslaught of an indignant public.

* * *

In 1852 a young Fort Recovery man struck metal while hoeing near the roots of an old decayed tree. Investigation revealed an iron bound wooden box which contained 900 gold and silver coins valued at \$14,000.

This was supposed to be the Army Paymaster's box. At the time of General St. Clair's defeat in 1791 the box is said to have been hidden in a recess at the base of a large white oak tree. Whether or not it was the Army payroll and what became of it is not recorded.

* * *

In July 1851 heavy rain washed away much topsoil and revealed a human skull in the street near the site of the old fort in Fort Recovery.

A search resulted in exhuming the well preserved skeletons of 60 persons. The remains were placed in 13 coffins representing the 13 states in the Union at the time of General St. Clair's defeat. Re-interment was made with proper ceremonies, a parade and prominent speakers.

* * *

In 1835, Augustus Wattles, a native of Connecticut founded a colony of colored people in Marion, Franklin and Granville Townships.

With his own money he bought 190 acres and founded a manual labor school for colored boys and financed it until 1842. It was then he secured from the trustees of the Samuel Emlen estate, money to purchase his farm and establish the Emlen Institute. Emlen left \$20,000 by will for the support and education of worthy boys of African and Indian descent.

The school's life was shortened when anti-negro sentiment in Mercer County increased and came to a climax in 1846. This crisis developed after Judge Leigh of Virginia purchased 3200 acres of land for the freed slaves of John Randolph.

When 483 of these emancipated slaves arrived they were prevented from disembarking from the canal boats. They later scattered throughout Ohio, the majority of them settling in Shelby and Miami Counties.



Fort Recovery Main Street

January 1, 1864 is credited with being one of the coldest days in the history of Mercer County and caused the greatest suffering ever experienced in the mid-west.

December 31st was abnormally warm and then without warning the temperature dropped at an alarming rate of seven degrees per hour. At 2 a.m. it was 14 degrees below zero. Thereafter there was no record as thermometers could no longer register the cold.

A New Year's ball was held at the Small House, later the Ellis House and now the site of Hileman's Service Station, corner of Main and Livingston streets, Celina.

A party of St. Marys friends including Mrs. Mary TouVelle came for the gala event, which like modern social parties was a dinner dance. The temperature dropped fearfully fast. Fire places were stoked to capacity and the guests wearing wraps danced fast and long in an effort to keep warm.

The call to dinner found the guests exhausted, cold and miserable, but added to these discomforts, the dinner had actually frozen on the plates between the time it was taken up and they started to eat.

The golden brown quail was ice-crusted; the mashed potatoes were hard and crystalline and slivers of ice formed in the coffee cups.

The last dance was finished without George Breo and his violin as the cold had snapped two of the violin strings.

This frigid condition covered a wide area and many deaths by freezing resulted. Cattle and horses were frozen in a standing position and sheep were found frozen stiff in groups.

Mercer County Firsts

Available records indicate that the first house erected in Mercer County was of log construction and was built by John Simms, 1817 in the Fort Recovery area.

* * *

The first church was built in Union township in 1818 and was made of logs.

* * *

The first official census was taken in 1820 and listed 100 residents of all ages in Mercer County.

* * *

The first grist or flour mill was built on the Wabash River near Fort Recovery in 1830

* * *

The first County Agricultural Society was organized in 1851 and the first fair was held in 1852.

The oldest town in Mercer County is Rockford, founded and platted in 1820 by Anthony Shane, half-breed Ottawa Indian trader.

* * *

The first town to be incorporated was Fort Recovery in 1856.

* * *

The first Public Library in Mercer County was established by the Celina village council in 1861, with a gift of books from Thomas J. Godfrey, a young attorney and later the first State Senator from the district, who lived in Mercer County.

* * *

The first street lighting system in the county was 17 coal oil lamps installed on the streets of Celina in 1879.

* * *

The first opera house opened to road shows and entertainment was on the third floor of what is now the Lininger building, Celina, about 1877 or 1878.

* * *

The first High School formed in the county was at Celina in 1866 and the first graduate was the late Mrs. Lizzie (Snyder) McKim.

* * *

Mercer County's first woman physician was Mrs. Lida Lisle of Celina, whose husband was also a physician. She practiced in the 1880's and early 90's and specialized in women's and children's diseases.

* * *

The first oil well drilled in Mercer County was in Union Township in the late 1880's. This was during the height of the oil excitement in the Lima field.

* * *

The first soy beans grown in Mercer County and introduced in the tri-state area was by Hugh L. Hamilton, Union Township in 1912. It was not until 1900 that the United States Department of Agriculture became interested in soy beans a native of China. It was then they started their first small experimentation. It was not until 1920 that the farmers showed much interest in this great forage, seed and grain crop.

* * *

April 12, 1912, the first concrete highway in the county was authorized by the county commissioners. It was then State Road 566-Grand Lake west bank road. It was a two mile stretch, 10 feet wide. The Commissioners were: Frank Dillhoff, I. N. Kiser and Fred Heiby. Jefferson Township trustees were: J. F. Smith, J. G. Staeger and Roy Lincoln. Dillon Smalley was County Engineer.

Mercer County's first and only complete department store was opened in Celina by Lininger Brothers in 1912. It was three floors and had the luxury of an elevator.

* * *

West Fayette Street in Celina was Mercer County's first paved street. It was constructed of brick in 1902.

* * *

Mercer County's first movie theater or Nickelodeon was started by Roy Steele, 1905 in Celina.

* * *

The first self-serve grocery in the county was a Piggly-Wiggly opened by the late John Morrow in the Lininger building.

* * *

The first American Legion Post formed in the county was Celina 210 which was chartered in 1919.

* * *

The oldest house in Mercer County and which is still standing was built in 1826. It was the home of Justin Hamilton and stands on a knoll beside Twelve-Mile Creek south of Mendon on the Carpenter farm.

* * *

The oldest house in Mercer County and which is still in use as a residence, is modern and in excellent condition was built by J. J. Beach in 1837. It is located at 111 South Ash Street, Celina and is owned by Mr. and Mrs. John R. Sealschott.

* * *

The first term of court in Mercer County was held in Shanesville, now Rockford with Judge Low presiding. That was prior to time when St. Marys was the first county seat.

CITIES AND TOWNS

Celina

The original plat of Celina was made by Peter Aughenbaugh, R. W. Stearnes, Robert Linzee and James W. Riley, a partnership, and was recorded August 25, 1834. The surveying was done by Mr. Riley, and the platting was entered for record Septembr 8.

The name of the village originated with Mr. Riley because it reminded him of surroundings and similarity of the location of Salina, New York.

The first court house erected in Celina as the new county seat of Mercer County was completed in June 1841.

Celina was incorporated as a village June 2, 1860 and the first Major was Dr. Joseph N. Hetzler in 1861. The first village council elected was Adam Baker, John Luck, John M. Pohlman and S. S. Snyder.

Celina's growth and importance actually dated from the disastrous fire in 1894. New and substantial buildings rose from the



blacked rubble. In 1895 a modern water works system was provided, replacing the many fire cisterns. Fire fighting equipment was purchased and in 1900 an electric light plant was installed.

In the same year Celina's industrial expansion started with the establishment of the forerunner of the Mersman Brothers Corporation.

In 1902 the first of several brick pavement was laid, West Fayette street and in each succeeding year succeeding strides were made in all phases of industrial, civic, religious and cultural life.

In 1950 Celina's population passed the 5000 mark and was rated a city. From that date up to the present, 1959, the growth has been phenomenal. Today, based on school enumeration figures and utility outlets, Celina's population is placed in excess of 8000 and in 1958 was rated by official Ohio figures to be one of the fastest growing small cities, not only in Ohio, but in the middle west.

At this time a \$1,200,000 electric power plant expansion and a new \$700,000 sewer network is under way.

When the new West Elementary public school was completed in 1957, according to the best plans and estimates, it was expected to take care of increased enrollments until 1965 or 1966. This year, however it was found necessary to take immediate steps to provide additional facilities, probably for the 1961-62 term of school.

Coldwater

Coldwater was founded by A. O. Munsell and the plat was recorded August 18, 1859. Before its incorporation in 1883 it was referred to as Buzzard's Glory, being named after David Buzaird who was the owner of the first general store in the village.

The first industry in the town was a ship timber company whose product was hauled to Celina and barged across the Reservoir to the Miami & Erie canal for shipment to Lake Erie.

The two railroads marked the real beginning of Coldwater's growth, however the manure spreader factory started by Joseph Oppenheim in 1907 was the greatest stimulus to Coldwater's advance as an important business center.

The first log cabin in Coldwater was built in 1838 by A. O. Munsell on the corner of what is now First and South streets.

The first village officials elected in 1883 were: Joseph L. Weis, Mayor; Walter J. Ball, Clerk; Henry Houser, Treasurer; Joseph Wagoner, Marshal. The councilmen were: Peter Haubert, J. B. Hoyng, John Martz, George Rosenbeck, Lawrence Woeste and S. T. Johnson. Elasius Birkmeyer was street commissioner.

Rockford

The earliest known history of Rockford centered around Anthony Madore, French-Canadian who operated a trading post along the St. Marys river adjacent to the present site of the American Legion home. It is not known when Madore came or how long he

operated the post, but it is claimed that when he died, his body was placed in a hollowed out split log, bound with grape vines and buried near the trading post.

Anthony Shane who was of French-Indian extraction lived nearby and apparently took over the trading post. It was later acquired by Col. William B. Hedges, who with his family moved to Shanes Crossing, later known as Shaneville and in 1890 changed to Rockford. The village was incorporated in 1866.

General Harmer and his army passed through Shanes Crossing on his way to Fort Wayne where he was disastrously defeated. In the War of 1812 it was on the route of General William Harrison whose destination was Detroit where he was joined by 1000 more troops.

The Indians in this vicinity, originally were Miamis and were driven out by the warlike Shawnees and then settled near Fort Wayne. Other tribes in this area were Wyandots, Senecas and Ottowas.

Grants of land along the St. Marys river were made by the Treaty of St. Marys in 1818 and established Reservations for the Godfreys, Shane, Black Loon, Crescent, Charlie and Labadie of the Miami.

Rockford which is the oldest settlement in Mercer County and one of the oldest in Northwest Ohio was founded in 1820 by Anthony Shane. It has the added distinction of being the county's first seat of justice. In 1866 it was incorporated as Shanes Crossing.

Mendon

In 1834, Justin Hamilton and Thomas Parrott platted and founded the village of Guilford and a short time later changed the name to Mendon. An earlier attempt by others to found the town of Coilstown as a trading center, ended in failure.

When first established there was a log school, a horse-mill (a grist mill operated by horse power), and a general store. Later the horse-mill was supplanted by a water power mill and that in turn by steam operation.

The original plat consisted of 43 lots which extended from the St. Marys River to the present public square at Market street. The other streets were Main, Warren, Wayne, Green, Mill and High.

Mendon was incorporated as a village in 1881 and its first officers were: L. A. Barber, Mayor; J. H. Moore, Clerk; William Hamilton, Treasurer; William Rider, Marshal. The councilmen were: A. J. Lininger, F. S. Collins, J. W. Murlin, John Bevan and Joseph Hesser.

Mendon was the center of an oil boom at the turn of the century and today a few of these wells are periodically pumped. The first oil well in the county was drilled northeast of the town.

Fort Recovery

Historic Fort Recovery was platted by David Beardslee in 1836 and dating from 1858 is the oldest incorporated town in Mercer County.

The site of Fort Recovery first came into prominence in the history of the Northwest Territory, November 4, 1791, when General Arthur St. Clair met his disastrous defeat on the banks of the Wabash River.

It was not until December 25, 1793 that Fort Recovery was built by General Anthony Wayne and the conquest of the Northwest Territory was begun.

Among the earliest residents of Fort Recovery were John Simison, who moved into the trading post which had been built previously. Many present residents of this vicinity are descendants of the hardy pioneers who opened this area to farming and trade. Dr. J. S. Fair was the first physician to practice in Fort Recovery and was followed by Dr. J. C. Richardson in 1843.

Fort Recovery lies in both Recovery and Gibson townships and the dividing line is the Greenville Treaty Line.

Henry Lipps came to Fort Recovery in 1830 and was the first hotel keeper. He also served in the Ohio Legislature in 1849. David and Obed Breadslee, John Lipps, William McDaniel and a Mr. Larkin were among the earliest arrivals.

The most important of the early industries was the Krenning Wollen Mills which made blankets, shawls and yarns.

Today Fort Recovery attracts thousands of tourists and visitors who come to see their fine Museum, re-constructed stockade fort and beautiful towering stone monument erected by the Government commemorating the rich historic past and importance of old Fort Recovery.

St. Henry

St. Henry was founded by Henry Romer, one of Granville townships earliest settlers, and the plat of 88 lots was recorded July 13, 1837. Mr. Romer and his family and the Beckman and Bruns families were closely connected with the early history of the village. Each of the three Henrys, Romer, Beckman and Bruns were pioneer business men.

St. Henry which is on State Route 119 about one-half mile west of Route 118 was incorporated in 1901 and through all of its years has been an important business center in south-central Mercer County.

THE 14 TOWNSHIPS

Blackcreek

Blackcreek Township was organized April 12, 1834, having been detached from Dublin which originally comprised the entire northern part of Mercer County. The first election was held April 28 of the same year, although no record has been found listing the first officers.

The first white settler in the township is thought to have been either William Harris or a man named Shaw. They were there when John Street, the first settler of record, arrived in 1830. Charles Henderson and Jacob Harper came in 1831.

Other pioneers who came prior to 1838 were Joseph Harper, Jacob Stettler, Ebeneezer Goddard, James Heath, John Rutan, Benjamin Manly, Jesse King and Silas Jordan.

The first marriage in the township was Jacob Harper and Kalinda Watkins in 1831, and their son Alexander born in 1833 was the first white child born in Blackcreek.

Jesse King was the first settler to abandon his log cabin and build a frame house.

The Methodist Class organized about 1856 by Rev. Joshua Smith was the first united religious effort in Blackcreek and meetings were held in Duck Creek school house until 1868 when they built the township's first church.

The first land entry was 80 acres in Section 3 by James Heath and in 1832, John Gans and James Nichols each entered 80 acres in section 3. Other settlers from 1838 to 1860 were the Winklers, Jordan, VanTilburg, Addy, Miller, Schoch, Martz, Leistner, Brandt and Morrison families.

Butler

Butler Township was constituted June 4, 1838 by the County Commissioners in accord with a request of 25 petitioners living in that area. The first election was held July 9, 1838 at the home of David Guy.

Records do not indicate who was the first settler in the township, however Joseph Shatto, who located near the present site of Coldwater in 1828, generally is given that honor. Other early arrivals were James Gray in 1835; John F. Hickman, Jerimah Plummer and Jacob Baker, 1836; Peter Stevens, 1837; William Bunch, 1839; John Buehler and W. B. Wigner, 1840; John Hyman, 1844; John Albers, John Grunden and David Gray.

Other arrivals up to 1858 were: Henry Lennartz, 1848; John Spoltman, 1849; Joseph H. Smith, 1852, John W. Bennett and Herman Nieberding, 1855; Joseph Birkmeyer, 1857 and Henry Roetker, 1858.

The first church organized in Butler was St. Marys Catholic at Philothea, September 6, 1851. The first building was of logs and

the present structure was built in 1871. Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Coldwater was formed in 1869 and the first pastor was Rev. Henry Drees.

Coldwater Methodist Church was organized about 1898. Three other congregations formed in Butler were Spring Valley, Burntwood U. B. and Ash Grove German Baptist Brethren.

Center

Center township, originally a part of Dublin, was set apart as a separate township, June 2, 1834. The first election was held at the home of William Bonafield, June 21, 1834. Mr. Bonafield is also credited with being one of the earliest settlers, arriving from Dublin in 1827 or 1828.

It seems logical that the township's first settler was Michael Harner, veteran of the War of 1812, who moved from Dublin township in 1820. Other pioneer citizens were Wesley Copeland, 1834; the Spicer family, 1835; William and C. L. S. Shanklin and Stephen Howick, 1837; Rev. Timothy Hankins, 1838. Rev. Hankins was also the first teacher in the township and held his classes in the kitchen of the James Thompson home. The date is unknown.

Other early arrivals were: Rev. James Drury, 1838; Jason and Atwater Hall and Jesse Keyser, 1839 and Luther Newcomb who built his home on land his father entered in 1837. In 1847 the James Malick and Zorpha Williams families arrived, followed by Henry J. McKirnan in 1851; Moses Townsend, Frederick Lutz and Lyman Dibble in 1853. The latter first settled in Jefferson in 1846.

William Bonafield entered land near the center of the township and in 1837 platted the village of Neptune. Because it was located on the old Plank Road (now U. S. 33) which carried many travelers between St. Marys and Fort Wayne, he built a wayside tavern to accomodate them.

Center Chapel Methodist Church was organized in 1843 by Rev. David Gray at the home of Enos Hays. Copps Chapel was founded by Rev. Wilcox in 1851 at the home of Jacob Copps.

There were three groups of the Church of God. Beery Bethel by Elder Crump in 1853. Fairview by Elder Small in 1866 and Neptune Church of God formed in 1869 by Elder Warner.

Mount Zion U. B. Church was activated in 1850 by Rev James Loy; Mount Gilead Baptist Congregation was formed in 1843 by Rev. James Drury.

Dublin

Dublin Township was organized June 7, 1824 and comprised the entire northern part of Mercer County.

Many of the records up to 1838 are missing and included in these are early elections and names of the first officers.



St. Henry Main Street

It is the opinion of the writer and there is much evidence to substantiate this view, that these missing records as well as some from Blackcreek and other townships are a part of and included in the famous Draper Collection of Mercer County records which mysteriously disappeared and covered a period of 15 to 20 years in the 1820's and 1830's.

They are now a treasured and zealously protected set of documents in the archive of the Wisconsin State Historical Building on the campus of the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

These records were wanted by Wisconsin officials or historians because of the information they contained concerning the movement of Indians from northern Mercer County to Wisconsin. Carelessness or illegal release of these papers by local officials would necessarily be involved.

The first white settlement was made in Dublin in 1819, immediately after the signing of the St. Marys Treaty with the Indians. Among these first settlers during 1819-20 were William B. and John P. Hedges, John Ruel, Benjamin Roebuck, Dr. Lilley, Samuel Lilley, Johnathan Antonides, Anson Goddard, Michael Harner, Jamiel Harrison, William and Jacob Baker.

John VanGundy, John Sutton, John Chivington, Henry Bevington, Peter Edsell, Calvin Dennison, Joseph Green, Samuel and Isiah Duncan. When they arrived they found Madore, the French-Canadian operating a trading post and dealing with the Indians, who were then friendly to the government.

In 1821-22, David Hays, Joseph Henkle, Timothy Green and Col. A. R. Hunter arrived. Others who followed were: Isaac Coil, John and Jesse McChristy, John K. Evans, Eli Compton, Brewers, Updykes, William Frysinger, Joseph Baltzell, Robert Wiley, William and Smith Clark, David Work, John Lilley, William Bonafield, John H. Dysert, Jerimiah Shingledecker, John Shellenbarger, Peter Dull, G. C. Koeppel, Schumms and Putnams.

Anthony Shane, an Indian half-breed laid out the plat of Shanesville in 1820. David Work opened a tannery. William Baker was the first blacksmith, while Joseph Green taught the first term of school. The first Doctors were Tippie and Bud.

The first organized worship services in Mercer County were under the direction of the St. Marys Mission of the Methodist Church and were known as the Celina Circuit. The first Class was organized in 1829 by Robert Finley. The first missionaries were Revs. John Wood and Abraham Miller.

The Presbyterian congregation was organized in 1856 and worshiped in the Methodist Church until 1877. The Stringtown U. B. Church was formed in 1841. The Mercer Methodist class which was formed in the early 30's was served by the Rockford or Shanesville pastor, while the Mercer Baptist Church was organized in 1845.

Franklin

Franklin Township was organized December 7, 1841 and the first election was held the following December 24, however records of the first officials were not found by the writer.

When the first settlers arrived, a small band of Chickasaw Indians were found which are referred to in more detail elsewhere in the Chickasaw Story.

Fish and wildfowl were abundant and their sale and shipment provided a large part of the revenue of the early settlers. Much later natural gas added much to the economy of the people. The wells were originally drilled in search of oil. The life of the gas field was short.

Among Franklin's earliest settlers were Stephen Sprague, Abraham and John Miller, the Lacy, Beauchamp and Johnson families; Charles and William Botkin, 1831; Peter Circle, 1835; A. Lambert, 1850; Isaac W. Preston, 1845; William P. Long, 1837; Singleton Buxton, 1841; Charles Burge, 1835; William B. Winters, 1831; William Ballinger, 1833; Morris Kelley, 1850 and J. F. Miller, 1854.

The first church organized was the United Brethren in 1845, and the pastor was Rev. R. Gillem. Today there are three churches in the township, the Methodist and Church of Christ in Montezuma and Guadalupe Catholic Church east of Montezuma.

Gibson

The early records of Gibson Township is one of the most incomplete of any of the townships of Mercer County, with the exception of its military record.

Gibson was originally a part of Darke County and was annexed to Mercer County in 1849 as it is now constituted. Records prior to 1860 have not been found, however the first election was held in 1834.

Azariah Denney came to Gibson with his parents when 10 years old and at that time there were 26 families of Miami Indians camped on Simison's Run and the young Indian bucks were his playmates.

Among the earliest pioneers was John Simison who settled in Fort Recovery in 1817. He was the father of the much publicized William Simison of Granville Township.

Other early arrivals were John Hedrick, 1839; George Hedrick and William Snyder, 1835; George R. McDaniel, 1836; Thomas Rockwell, 1837; John L. Fox, 1837; S. L. Fair, 1836; Joseph W. Gray, 1844; Jacob H. VanKirk, 1845; William Koch and J. W. Myers, 1845. Among the other pioneers were the Clark, Hastings, Collins, Hays, Mott and Schaffer families.

The first churches were Bethel Evangelical in 1858 and St. Paul's Catholic at Sharpsburg, 1868.

Granville

The County Commissioners, on June 5, 1837 granted a petition asking that the east portion of Recovery Township be set apart as a separate township. It was named Granville and the first election was held June 26 with the following officers selected: James Grant, Justice of the Peace; John Wright, Clerk and William Franklin, Constable.

The platting of St. Henry was recorded July 31, 1837 and Burkettsville, November 25, 1876.

Among the townships earliest citizens was William Simison. He was a native born citizen, 1827. Henry Bruns was another 1827 arrival.

William Franklin, a veteran of the War of 1812 was an early comer as were Lot and Jacob Franklin who arrived in 1831. Among other early pioneers were: Casper Stelzer and William Stretcher, 1833; J. B. Drahman, 1836; John H. Romer, 1837 and Andrew Post who was born in Mercer County in 1837; Joseph Robbins and Henry Beckman, 1839.

There are four Catholic Churches in Granville, the oldest of which is St. Henry's at St. Henry, which congregation dates from 1830 and the first church was built in 1840. Father Bartels was the pastor.

St. Wendelin's Church in Wendlin was organized in 1856. St. Francis Church at Cranberry Prairie was founded in 1858 while St. Bernard's at Burkettsville was established in 1875.

North of Burkettsville is located the Novitiate of the Fathers of the Most Precious Blood. Here, young men who will enter St. Charles Seminary to prepare for the Priesthood, take one year of preparedness study.

Hopewell

Hopewell, originally a part of Dublin Township was set apart as a separate township by the Mercer County Commissioners, December 6, 1842.

The western part of Hopewell was settled largely by people of German extraction, while the north and east parts were occupied in the majority by English speaking settlers from other parts of Ohio.

There is no authentic record of the first settlers in Hopewell, but among the early pioneers generally credited to Dublin Township may actually be some who established their homes in what is now Hopewell, which was originally a part of Dublin.

Among the early arrivals were: the Hitchners in 1820; McChristy families prior to 1830; William Y. Wallace, Frederick Sielschot, Michael Hellwarth, John Eichar, all in 1837; John Fetter, 1836; William Buck, 1838.

Others coming in the 1840's and 1850's were the Solomon Zimmerman, Now, Siebert, Miller, Frahm, Morrow, Shimp, Willcutt, Lehman, Krogman, Ragedanz, Eichenauer and Stedcke families.

The first church denominations organized were St. John's Evangelical Lutheran, 1866; Hope of the Evangelical Association, 1869. Tabor Church of God when first organized held services in the Mercer Methodist Church. Pleasant View was a Society of the Church of God. Friends Church was organized about 1885-87 and Union U. B. in the early 90's.

Jefferson

Although Mercer County was established as a separate county in 1824 and Celina was platted in 1834, Jefferson Township was not set aside as a township until March 5, 1839.

This is accounted for by the fact that Mercer County's seat of government was changed from St. Marys to Celina in 1839.

The known actual dates when Jefferson Township's first settlers arrived are very few, and among them are Robert Linzee, 1832; Andrew Crockett, 1834 and Dr. Milton Miller, 1843. Others were here prior to these dates including James W. Riley, Rufus Stearnes and Peter Augenbaugh.

The first church built in Jefferson was the Presbyterian in Celina, 1840 and Rev. I. N. Taylor was the pastor. The first Methodist Class was organized in 1838 by Revs. George Armstrong and Greenburg Vincent. A church was not established until 1843 and the first building was erected in 1856.

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1863 and their building completed in 1872. The first pastor was Rev. Conrad Eppens.

The Catholic services were held in the home of Joseph Zenders in 1864 by Rev. Bernard Dickman, C.P.P.S. The first church was dedicated December 8, 1865 by Father Dwenger.

Liberty

In 1840 when Adam Bollenbaugher, Jacob and Phillip Dietsch families came to Liberty Township, they found four cabins in the primitive wilderness which were supposed to have been previously occupied by Daniel Freeman, John and Philip Bolton, Timothy Hankins and Isaac Treece.

Another account credits Freeman as arriving in 1830, while others claim Henry Robinson was the first settler, coming in 1830 and taking up land in Section 31.

Along with this uncertainty, is a definite record of a land entry to David Smith, of 160 acres in Section 8 in 1833. Among others who made up the pioneer segment of this thrifty community were John Leininger, 1836; Adam Dickes, 1838; John Myers, 1839; John Deitsch, 1840; John Becker, 1841; Henry Kuhn, Henry Leininger, Dr. S. R. Wilson, the Kables, Sam M. Loree and Christian Kessler.

The township was organized March 1, 1841 and the first election was held in the following June. A record of the first officers has not been found.

The earliest churches were St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran now Evangelical-Reformed established in 1841 by Rev. Fred Knabe and Zion Evangelical Lutheran in Chattanooga which was formed in 1860.

Marion

The earliest official record of Marion township is the result of the first election and was signed by James L. Sines, township clerk, June 25, 1833.

This election followed a petition filed with the Commissioners by residents of the Chickasaw settlement, asking that a township be organized.

The first officials were: James Sines, Clerk; Samuel Gray, Charles Botkins and John Miller, Trustees; John Sprague, Treasurer; Matthew Kerns and Alexander Gillaspe, Overseers of the Poor; John Davis, William Botkins and Hugh Miller, fence viewers.

Records indicate that the first Roman Catholic Church was St. Alvis, established at Carthagena in 1836, on land purchased from a colony of freed former negro slaves who had settled there.

St. Johns Church was established in 1837 and among its early members were the Reicherts, Kramers, Moellers, Goeckes, Elkings, Hinders and Gasts.

The settlers were among the second influx of pioneers in Marion township. The first arrivals were practically wiped out by the disastrous Asiatic Cholera epidemic of 1832 which almost depopulated the entire area as well as adjoining parts of Darke, and what is now Auglaize counties.

St. Johns was surveyed September 22, 1838 and the west addition, now Maria Stein was laid out by Archbishop Purcell in 1851. Carthagena was platted in 1840 by Charles Moore. Rose Garden, now St. Rosa was founded in 1854, while Marysville, now Casella was platted in 1860.

Recovery

Recovery township was organized in 1831 and the first land entry recorded was 37 acres to A. J. Parrish in 1830.

School was held in several places, however the first building was erected by Robert G. Blake in 1859. The district comprised Recovery and Gibson.

The first church built in Recovery was St. Josephs in 1838. It was a log structure, and the first priest was Rev. John Herzog. The earliest members included the Dull, Weiss, Kramer, Goecke and Buschor families.

Protestant churches were erected in the following sequence: German Evangelical, 1872; Methodist, 1874-75; Christian, 1875.

One of the first arrivals in the township was John Simison who moved his family into the trading post which was 12 feet square and surrounded by an eight foot high stockade. His daughter married Peter Studerbaker and their first born was the first white child born in that area.

Joshua Nickerson came in 1827 and was followed by John McDaniel, 1828 and a Miller family in 1829.

The first grist mill in Mercer County was built on the Wabash river in 1832 by David Anderson. It is possible however that several horse operated mills in either or all of Recovery, Dublin and Union townships may have preceded this water wheel mill.

Union

In 1828, Union township was detached from Dublin and at that time it included what is now Center township.

The winding course of the St. Marys river and its two tributaries Eight-Mile and Twelve-Mile Creeks presented one of the two formidable problems to the early settlers, which was drainage. The other was the unusually heavy stand of timber to be cleared.

In 1822, Andrew Coil and families completed their long trek through the wilderness and built their cabins on Twelve-Mile Creek, where they cleared a tract and raised the first crop in Union township.

In 1823 he platted a town which he called Coilstown which failed to live. It was not until 1834 that Justin Hamilton and Thomas Parrott laid out Gilford (now Mendon) which grew and prospered as the trading center of the area.

In 1822, Isaah Duncan and James Green arrived. Michael Harner who first settled in Dublin in 1819, moved to Union in 1823. In this same year several more families arrived, among them Justin Hamilton who first moved from New York state to Hardin county Kentucky in 1818.

He built a cabin on Twelve-Mile Creek and several years later cut his own timber, moulded and fired the first brick made in Mercer County and built a framehouse. This two story building is now 133 years old and is still standing on a knoll overlooking Twelve-Mile Creek, on the Mercer road three-quarters of a mile west of the Celina-Mendon road.

Samuel Harrison was a 1823 arrival as was John Heath who built a horse mill to crush corn for the settlers. John and Jacob Van Gundy came in 1824. George Wilson and Peter Coil were 1827 arrivals and in 1828 came the families of Joseph Rider, Asabel Forbes, William Hamilton, Samuel C. Barber and Abraham B. Miller. More than a score of families established themselves in Union township during the 1930's.

The first election was held December 20, 1828 and the officers chosen were: Trustees, Benjamin Roebuck, Andrew Coil Jr. and Peter Coil; Clerk, Justin Hamilton; Treasurer, George Wilson; Trustees of School Lands, Samuel Harison, Peter Coil and Justin Hamilton; Treasurer of School Lands, Michael Harner; Constable, Samuel Hanson.

The first school built of logs was erected in 1827 by volunteer labor and the first term was taught by Justin Hamilton, whose salary was \$10.00 per month, without board and was paid by public subscription. The second log school was built in 1831 and the teacher Miss Matilda Freeman received \$1.00 per week and board.

The first Methodist Class in Mercer County was formed in the log school on Twelve-Mile in 1832 by a missionary from the St. Marys Mission. George Parrot was the leader.

Mendon was incorporated in 1881 and was struck by two disastrous fires in 1906 and 1907.

Washington

Washington township was set apart by the Commissioners, March 5, 1838 and the first election was held at the home of George Arbaugh, April 2 of the same year. The first officers were: Trustees, James Schoonover, David Trexler and James Q. Grimes; Clerk and later Justice of the Peace, William Nichols; Constable, Peter Stevens; Overseers of the Poor, John Dixon and George Armstead; Fence Viewers, Samuel Dixon and Samuel Freeman Jr.; Supervisor, Justin Stevens; Treasurer, George Arbaugh.

Among the earlist settlers were: John Boley, John Betz, Samuel Arbaugh, David Harrod, E. A. Hilleary, William Spriggs, W. Fishbaugh, Joseph and William Loughridge, David Houston, William B. Wilson, Daniel Freeman, John and Amos Dixon, Adam Miller, William Armstead, Samuel McDowell and Richard Scott.

St. Anthony's Catholic Church is the oldest congregation in the township and was organized prior ot the erection of their first log church in 1852.

The first Protestant congregation was St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran organized in 1861. Bethel Christian was formed in 1871 and Wabash Christian in 1880. Two Methodist congregations formed were Erastus and Washington Chapel.

The early development of Washington township was retarded by land speculators who entered hundreds of acres but never lived on it or improved it. This became commonly known as Speculators' Land.

When the famous tornado of 1886 struck Mercer County it was in Washington township where it exerted its greatest fury. There were a number of casualties; scores of buildings were demolished including St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School. Their other claim to fame was being the home of the first Medical School in Ohio which was located in Macedon and is covered in another story in this book.



Oldest House In Mercer County

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